Industry Perspectives on YouRateIt

YouTube Content Creators and Age Recommendation Systems

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ABSTRACT

Video-sharing platforms like YouTube contain a significant amount of user-generated content. The younger audiences of these platforms have shown to be more prone to harmful content than when they are watching film or television. This has multiple reasons and one of them is, because user-generated content is under-regulated. In order to better protect these younger audiences, the Dutch regulatory organ, NICAM (the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media), has created an age recommendation system called YouRateIt. With this age recommendation system, uploaders and audiences of user-generated content can fill in a questionnaire which will result in an age recommendation for audiences. This system has been tested, but not with real content creators on YouTube, the largest online platform which provides user-generated content. This research answered the question who YouTube content creators would feel about an online content rating system to inform audiences below seventeen years old about possible harmful content. Data has been gathered with ten semi-structured in-depth interviews with Dutch YouTube content creators. The transcripts of these ten interviews have been thematically coded which has resulted in three main themes: professionalization, monetization and responsibility. The thematic analysis of the data has revealed that content creators can't be defined as professional or amateur but that there are new ways of working, with new needed skills adapted to be successful on YouTube as an a new industry. Almost all content creators their content has been monetized and most content creators reckon with these financial advantages in their creation process. All content creators mentioned that parents are responsible in the end, but wouldn't mind participating in a system which would make it easier for parents and children to navigate online. They are more positive about the helpfulness for parents than for the children themselves. Nevertheless, they do want to be professional and transparent and thus they wouldn't mind participating in an age recommendation system like YouRateIt if it doesn't cost too much effort. However, they are still very critical about the financial influences, since they rely heavily on YouTube and their advertisers for their income. Multiple participants indicated that they would show reluctance when their revenues would be lower because of an age recommendation system.

KEYWORDS: YouTube, user-generated content, age recommendations, regulation, video-sharing platforms

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1. Introduction

This research will focus on the viewpoint of content creators on the regulation of the video-sharing platform YouTube. Video-sharing platforms have become very popular but are also relatively unregulated compared to the regulation of other parts of the audiovisual industry like the film and television. The European Union has announced changes in the legislation around these video-sharing platforms. NICAM (the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media) has responded to this new legislation with the creation of an age recommendation system for video-sharing platforms, called YouRateIt. This research will focus on the viewpoints of Dutch YouTube content creators on this age recommendation system.

This chapter will introduce this subject, starting with social relevance and the legal context of the regulation of the audiovisual industry for minors and this age recommendation system in particular. The second part will elaborate on the academic relevance of this research, especially the relevance of research into the viewpoint of the content creators. The third section will introduce the research question and the two sub-questions. In the last section, the outline of this thesis will be discussed.

1.1 Social relevance and legal context

In the past years, the relationship between YouTube and their younger audiences has gotten a significant amount of attention in the Dutch media. Especially the risks for children watching user-generated content. The internet and YouTube specifically, are seen as a free and open space which can empower children, however, there are also risks involved. and those risks have been picked up by the Dutch mainstream media. Besides the Dutch media, also European legislators were aware of these risks and adjusted their legislation to these changes in the audiovisual industry.

Multiple YouTube challenges have gotten media attention for supposedly having a bad influence on children who wanted to imitate these challenges. YouTube challenges are videos in which content creators do something difficult or scary and challenge their audiences or other content creators to do the same and film this. These challenges can be something funny, but also something dangerous. For example, the choking game and the tide pod challenge. For the tide pod challenge, content creators dare each other to chew on washing tablets. And for the chocking game challenge, content creators dare each other to squeeze their throat as long as they can and film themselves while doing this (Van Houwelingen, 2018). This chocking game is known for being very dangerous and has resulted in multiple hospital visits and has even resulted in several deaths (Stoffelen, 2017). There was also an uproar about seemingly innocent children cartoons which were edited with shock elements with the purpose to scare their young audiences. These videos can be found on YouTube, between the regular cartoons and can't be distinguished from regular cartoons beforehand (Verhagen, 2017). Also, the new

YouTube Kids accounts have received criticism. Those accounts were created for children below thirteen years old so that they can browse through YouTube safely. The young audiences who used these accounts seemed to be able to watch possibly harmful conspiracy theories with their Kids account (Cook, 2018). All these observations by the Dutch media indicate a fear for children being online and getting influenced negatively.

Academics indicate that this public fear created by the media isn't always correct. Burgess and Green (2009) confirm that the media coverage of YouTube very often express a public fear about digital media in relation to young people (p. 17). They state that the subjects of these so-called media panics "aren't representative of the practices of the YouTube community as a whole" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p.20). They argue that in the context of YouTube ethical norms about its content should be understood as something which is constantly being negotiated and contested on the platform itself (Burgess & Green, pp. 20, 21). Recently, radio, film, and television producer and content creator on YouTube, Bas van Teylingen has even written a book about these public concerns. This book guides parents who are, according to van Teylingen (2019), are influenced by these media panics and don't know how to deal with their children who watch a significant amount of user-generated content on YouTube. Besides this, he states that this public concern shown in the media isn't always realistic and shouldn't directly be taken over by parents (p. 81). Whether this public fear is realistic or not, user-generated content has been widely discussed in mainstream media and is heavily underregulated in relation to mainstream media like television broadcasting, film or print media.

The European Union has also noted the tension between children online and user-generated content and in June 2018, the European Union agreed on new legislation for audiovisual media services including video-sharing platforms. The European Union has decided on new legislation in which there is "equal protection, whether they are watching a film on traditional tv or an on-demand tv" (Council of the EU, 2018). This indicates that in the near future, not only film and television have to protect children from harmful content, but also online platforms. They have divided audiovisual media into three sections: (the more traditional) broadcasters, video-on-demand platforms, and video-sharing platforms. YouTube falls under the latter. This new policy for video-sharing platforms aims for "enhanced protection of minors from violence, hatred, terrorism, and harmful advertising" (European Parliament, 2018). An important difference from former legislation is that video-sharing platforms will be held responsible if they do not react quickly when users report or flag content as harmful. The legislation is also very clear on automatic filters. The parliament requests for "a transparent, easy-to-use and effective mechanism to allow users to report or flag content" (European Parliament, 2018). The European Union agreed on this in June 2018 and from then, EU member states have twenty-one months to transpose this to their national legislation (Council of the EU, 2018). Thus, video-sharing platforms and European nations have until March 2020 to decide how they will protect minor audiences from harmful content on online platforms.

In the Netherlands, NICAM (The Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media) has answered this call by the European Union for new regulatory systems. NICAM is a co-regulatory organization which tries to protect children from possible harmful content in the Netherlands. NICAM is the initiator behind the Dutch age recommendation system called Kijkwijzer. Kijkwijzer is a system with which NICAM gives audiences of film and television content age recommendations and warns them for possible harmful content for younger audiences. There are five different age recommendations: all ages, six years and above, nine years and above, twelve years and above and sixteen years and above. To indicate the origin of this possible harm, pictograms have been created. There are pictograms for violence, fear, sex, discrimination, drugs and/or alcohol abuse and coarse language (NICAM, 2006). NICAM is known for its rating system for film and television broadcasting, however, since online content is becoming very popular, the system is becoming less efficacious.

Recent studies have shown that YouTube is a popular platform for children to watch audiovisual content (Deirdre & Schneeberger. 2013; Holloway, Green & Livingstone, 2013; Mascheroni & Olafsson, 2014). In contrast to film and television, not all audio-visual content is checked for possible harmful content before being uploaded online and almost only audiovisual content which has been broadcasted on television or has been released in cinemas has an age recommendation. NICAM took notice of this in their system gap and together with similar institutions in the European Union, YouRateIt has been created. YouRateIt is a fast, simple and flexible tool with which uploaders and audiences of online content can create an age recommendation. The tool is based on experience from NICAM and the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). With YouRateIt content creators can answer six questions before uploading their content on online video platforms like YouTube. The outcome of the questionnaire is an age recommendation similar to the one for film and television. The system can adjust itself to the needs of different countries and different rating criteria and cultural sensitivities. The questionnaire can be filled in by the uploader, by the audience or by both (www.yourateit.eu). This system has been successfully tested but isn't active yet.

 In December 2018, the Dutch political party CDA (the Christian Democratic Appeal) has proposed the system in the Dutch house of representatives. This proposal from CDA is a reaction to new legislation of the European Union. However, other political parties are still skeptical and wonder how this could be implemented efficiently (Kasteleijn, 2018). At the time of writing this (June 2019), the Dutch government hasn't decided on this yet. YouTube has publicly reacted to CDA's announcement to implement YouRateIt. Richard Finge, the spokesman of Google Netherlands, has reacted that YouTube is already very busy with protecting minors. He gives YouTube Kids as an example and also mentions how self-learning computers can recognize certain content and can watch audiences for that. According to Finge, it is more logical to think in that direction instead of a time-consuming system like YouRateIt. He says this system would take too much effort and that there is too much content to rate (Keultjes & Schildkamp, 2018). This indicates that YouTube is not enthusiastic

about YouRateIt and would probably not participate in such a system if it isn't forced by the government.

The European Union made its stance about protecting minors clear with their new regulation and they would probably approve a system like YouRateIt. Besides the European Union, there is at least one party in the Dutch government approves. The mainstream media has shown its fear for user-generated content and its concern for young audiences and even YouTube has shared their stance. However, what is missing from all these opinions is the viewpoint of content creators themselves. The content creators, who would eventually have to work with the system, are the only actor from which NICAM doesn't have a reaction yet. Moreover, relatively little research has been done after content creators, despite the fact that these creators significantly differ from traditional professionals in the audiovisual industry (Banks & Humphreys, 2008, pp. 415, 416). This research is requested by NICAM and focusses on the views and opinions of these online content creators on YouTube.

1.2. Academic relevance

A shift has taken place from a mass communications paradigm towards more modern paradigms also referred to as convergent media or the Web 2.0 environment. This shift has had an influence on all aspects of audiovisual content. On how media are distributed and produced, on the power-relations, on the content and on the relationship between the consumer and producer (Flew, 2011, p.59). The changes in what children can and are watching on video-sharing platforms should be seen as part of this larger shift which has resulted in a transformation of the media industry and new actors like the creators of user-generated content.

These changes are still evolving and part of these changes has been the rise of video-sharing platforms like YouTube. Jenkins (2006) describes this process of media convergence as something which "alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment" (pp. 13, 14). During this process of convergence, the audiovisual media have not only changed in their appearance and the way consumers use them, but also the way in which this content is produced and thus how they could and would inform their audiences about possible harmful content. YouTube has had a central role in this process. "While many social media proved to be ephemeral, YouTube continues to rapidly expand and has become the second most visited website in the world. It has thereby established a unique role as a repository of popular culture" (Arthurs, Drakopoulou & Gandini, 2018, p.3). Since YouTube has such a central role as a provider of user-generated content, this research will focus on this platform. This thesis will research how producers of user-generated content on YouTube could be more involved in informing these audiences. This section will show why regulation should be more focused on the content creators of user-generated content and therefore more research should be done after these content creators.

Since the way in which content is produced and consumed has changed, current regulatory systems which try to protect children from harmful audiovisual content needs to be adjusted as well. The Dutch regulatory system was highly focused on television broadcasters and cinema's but today the audiovisual offer has grown and has become more divers than just film and television. The audiovisual markets and the relationship between media corporations and their audiences are changing (Napoli, 2011, p.78). Digital platforms have changed the ways in which consumers can interact with these services and since these platforms have opened up space for new players in the market (Nooren et al., 2018, p. 266). The online environment has created room for new players on the market, like YouTube, but also for new players like content creators on YouTube. Because of these new players in these new markets, the power relations in the industry have shifted and YouTube, for example, has opened up space for a new kind of labor for users, the content creators. Napoli (2011) describes how policy needs to adjust to these new forms of online labor, "ultimately, as media work extends beyond traditional media organizations, the thinking of media policy-makers needs to do the same" (p. 83). Policies need to be adjusted to these new markets and despite the emancipatory and openness of platforms like YouTube, it needs to be reminded that these new actors probably will not regulate themselves (Flew, 2011, p.70). In order to regulate these new actors, legislators need to know how these new actors operate. The effort to apply online regulations tends to be opposed to the common idea that the internet should be an open and free space. Content creators should be possible to act open and freely, but also with respect to children's rights. "Can society find a way to advance children's rights online without unduly trampling on business or (adult) citizens' interests?" (Livingstone & O'Neil, 2014, p. 3). YouTube is an online community, but foremost a company with business interests. "For YouTube, participatory culture is not a gimmick or a sideshow; it is absolutely core business" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, is important to know how all players in this market would react to new policies, and not only the larger actors like the company YouTube, but also the smaller parts of this industry, like individual content creators.

Besides just creating and enforcing new legislation, it is also effective to have corporation from all actors. Livingstone et al. (2011) argue that the industry has a crucial role in facilitating and promoting online safety because there is not always adult supervision available for children. They state that the industry should give internet safety advise and should offer user-friendly internet tools to encourage children to be self-governing. This indicates that the industry has a crucial role in future legislation and that ideally, the effort should come from the industry instead of the parents or the government. Livingstone et al. (2011) also call for more corporative agreements with the media industry to develop greater positive content for young children and to implement safety features on social network sites. There are self-regulatory systems across Europe which should be utilized and evaluated more (pp. 147, 148). Nooren et al. (2018) confirm this and argue that policymakers should explore, challenge and re-interpret existing regulations. This removes the need for new instruments and saves a significant amount of time. The existing instruments could be adjusted to the new media

environment (p. 296). This is exactly what NICAM tries to do with YouRateIt, they have adjusted the existing instruments which they have already created for film and television to the online environment.

One of the most important differences between film and television and content on video-sharing platforms is the transnational character of the online environment. Online platforms are more transnational and need a transnational solution (Carlsson, 2006, pp. 16, 17). This is why NICAM has cooperated with other similar institutions in Europe and why the system can be adjusted to cultural sensitivities. Another important difference is access, and since children have easier access online, it raises the question of who is responsible if children come across harmful content. Livingstone and Haddon (2012) state that parents have a great responsibility in guiding their children in this online world. However, sometimes they are often less familiar with new technologies than their children. They mention the more children become equipped to cope with these risks, the fewer others need to guide these children. This would mean that contributions from parents are needed but above all, from those involved in the internet industry (p. 5). This also indicates that an effort is needed from those users who create the content, and in the case of user-generated content, these are the users of the platform. However, if the industry would get responsibility it would be sensible to research their viewpoints, their motivations and their interests first.

1.3. Research question

This research focuses on Dutch content creators on YouTube to explore how these YouTube content creators would feel about an online content rating system to inform audiences below seventeen years old about possible harmful content. To get an answer to that question, this research is divided into two sub-questions. The first sub-question is about the awareness of these content creators about the possible harms of their content. About if they considered that children might be watching and if they considered that their content might be harmful to these children. This part of the research wants to find out what kind of content they create, what their audiences are and how they relate to these audiences. The second sub-question is more focused on a system which could possibly protect minors from harmful content on YouTube. This part is about their practices and how they could take more responsibility in protecting children from possible harmful content. If they inform their audiences when their content could be harmful and if they would be willingly to do that in the future. This has resulted in the following research question(s):

How would YouTube content creators feel about an online content rating system to inform audiences below seventeen years old about possible harmful content?

1.   What do these content creators think about their own content in relation to their possible underaged audiences?

2.   Under what conditions would YouTube content creators be more likely to be willingly to participate in an online content rating system?

To answer these questions ten semi-structured interviews were held with Dutch content creators on YouTube. These interviews were transcribed and eventually thematically analyzed.

1.4 Outline of this thesis

The following chapter will elaborate on previous research and theory about content regulation for children. This chapter will start with previous research about possible harmful content for children and will focus on user-generated content and video-sharing platforms. The next section will focus on theory and research regulation of the audio-visual industry to protect Dutch children from harmful media. The current Dutch co-regulatory system will be described next to future European regulation and YouTube's current policies. The next section will elaborate on the theory about YouTube's business model and the last section will elaborate on the theory about content-creators and their position in the media industry. The third chapter will describe the methodology. Ten semi-structured interviews were held with Dutch content creators on YouTube. Those content creators have been asked questions based on an interview schedule which was based on the theory. This section will describe the sampling process, the interviewing process, the thematic analysis process and eventually the validity and the credibility of this research.

The fourth chapter will present the results of the analysis of the data. The three main themes which have derived from the data are professionalization, monetization and responsibility. With the use of these three main themes, there will be explained what kind of relationship these ten participants have with their audiences and how they feel about informing their audiences about harmful content. The fifth chapter will give a conclusion, will answer the research question and will elaborate on the limitations and suggestions. This section will end with a recommendation on how to encourage content creators to participate in an age recommendation system on YouTube.

2. Theory and previous research

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore previous research about children and their relationship with media, user-generated content, regulation of the audiovisual industry and YouTube. The first half of this chapter will focus on the context of age recommendation systems and harmful content. First will be explained what kind of content younger audiences watch on video-sharing platforms like YouTube. After this, research about the possible risks of their watching behavior will be explained. The third section of this chapter will focus on theory and research about the regulation of the audio-visual industry to protect Dutch children from harmful media and the current co-regulatory system in the Netherlands will be described. After this, new European legislation will be explained and lastly, YouTube's current policies and theories about these policies will be explained.

The second half of this chapter will focus on the creators of user-generated content, theory about their way of working and on YouTube as an industry. This section will elaborate on the theory about YouTube's business model with a focus on the tension between being a community-driven and an industry-driven platform and the industry around this platform. In the last section, there will be focused on the content-creators on YouTube and their position in the media industry, new forms of labor and their motivations to create content.

2.2. Minor audiences and their online watching behavior

Media convergence has changed how consumers process audiovisual content and audiences aren't merely seen as "consumers of preconstructed messages but as people who are shaping, sharing, reframing and remixing media content" (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2013, p. 2). This indicates that (online) culture is heading towards a more participatory model of culture (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2013, p. 2). Media convergence and the participatory culture have caused changes in the behavior of audiences and thus also in the way minor audiences behave. This section will focus on these minor audiences and will elaborate on the influences these changes have had on the watching behavior of children and will discuss what possible risks these changes might bring with them.

2.2.1. Children online

The relationship between children and (new) media is two-folded. On the one side there are more opportunities for children to develop, however, access to all these new technologies and audiovisual content, can also lead to access to harmful content (Jordan, 2011, p. 1). Despite these changes in the media industry, one thing has remained the same and that is the normative opinion that children should be protected against harmful content (Lievens, 2007, p. 316). There are multiple

policy options to protect children from this, but before discussing the media policy options, there will be clarified what children actually do online and what they need to be protection from.

Besides looking at the behavior of children online, the discourse around minor audiences will be discussed. This because there have been changes in the construction of the Western idea of childhood. Since the nineteenth century, a dominant feature of the Western idea of childhood has been an association with private rather than public space. The public space was constructed as an adult space and as a possible treat to children (Facer, 2012, p. 397). The internet has unbalanced this construction of childhood by blurring the boundary between the public and the private domain have changed. Younger audiences can easily enter and discover online public spaces by themselves and thus can more easily enter spaces which were perceived as adult spaces.

Children are more likely to use the internet unsupervised and this has multiple reasons. First, there is a multiplication of personally owned media and therefore media is used in a new arrangement of space and time. Technological innovations have made devices more portable and have lowered the prices. This has transformed the social contexts of the use of audiovisual media. Second, there is diversification and high flexibility in the offered goods. Third, media services have converged and due to these social boundaries between home/work, entertainment/information etc. have also converged. Fourthly, as described earlier, communication has become more interactive (Livingstone, 2002, pp. 19, 20). Those changes in the media services have changed the way in which children use media and what content they come across. This means that children are more likely to come across content which is meant for adults and that children are more likely to use the internet unsupervised.

Research has shown that YouTube is a popular platform for children to watch audiovisual content. Holloway, Green and Livingstone (2013) have done research about children between zero and eight years old and their internet use. Watching videos on YouTube was found to be the second favorite online activity of children below five years old in the United Kingdom (p. 12). YouTube is a platform for both user-generated content and professional content. Popular television shows like Sesame Street are successfully distributed on YouTube (Holloway, Green & Livingstone, 2018, p. 18). Similar results about the watching behavior of children can be found in other research. A significant amount of television content is broadcasted on YouTube and is directly competing with television content. Deirdre and Schneeberger (2013) have done research about the availability and distribution of audiovisual services for European children. Their research shows how professional producers of content, like Disney or public broadcasters also successfully offer their content on YouTube, which indicates that not only user-generated content is created on this platform, but also professional content. Mascheroni and Olafsson (2014) have researched children's online activities in Denmark, Italy, Romania, the UK, Belgium, Ireland, and Portugal. They state that one out of three children has a profile on a media sharing platform like Instagram or YouTube (p. 106). YouTube and Instagram are, according to their research, the most popular media sharing platforms. They conclude that fifty five percent of the respondents who have a social media account said that they are most likely to use their

YouTube account (p. 33). They also confirm that children indeed use mobile devices mostly privately in their own room: seventy nine percent of children use the internet daily at home, in their own bedroom or elsewhere at home. This number increases with age, rising from fifty six percent of nine to ten-year-old children to ninety two percent of older teenagers (p. 105). Thus, YouTube is widely used by children in Europe and these numbers only seem to increase.

The above described research was all in the European context, but also Dutch research shows similar results. Van Teylingen (2019) refers to research done by Newcom and mentions that fifty percent of the Dutch youth between fifteen and nineteen uses YouTube daily (p. 16). Also Dutch children tend to watch YouTube privately. Van Teylingen (2006) refers to research done by a Dutch telecom provider which states that in 2017 five percent of all Dutch four years old had their own smartphone and of all Dutch twelve years old children ninety four percent had their own smartphone (p. 11). This indicates that children do use video-sharing platforms like YouTube to watch audiovisual content and it is one of the most popular channels to do so. They mostly watch privately and thus unsupervised by adults. The following sections will elaborate on the possible risks of this new online watching behavior of children.

2.2.2. *The possible risks of children being online*

Besides the fact that children mostly watch audiovisual content in a private sphere instead of the public sphere and on a mobile device instead of in a cinema or on a television in the Livingroom, children also watch a different kind of content. Video-sharing platforms like YouTube contain besides professional content also user-generated content. User-generated content differs from professional content and thus also comes with different types of risks. The following section will focus on research about the possible harms of this user-generated content.

User-generated content is different from professional content. It contains different formats like vlogs, challenges, and personal talks about life, about games and so forth. Different types of content also bring different risks along. Research by Livingstone et al. (2011) has shown that the second most common risk for children online is the exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content. Twenty-one percent of their eleven to sixteen-year-old interviewees have been exposed to one or more types of harmful user-generated content (p. 7). This research doesn't mention on which sites these children have found this harmful content exactly, however, it is mentioned that forty-six percent of the children who have seen sexual images online have seen those images on video hosting sites like YouTube (p. 51). Livingstone (2011) mentions that children are more likely to find harmful content online than from older/other media because there is little regulation which restricts the distribution of this harmful media content (p.5). The risks of violent content on YouTube are most likely different than the risks of violent content on videogames or television. Since the context and the content are different (Livingstone et al., 2014, p. 284). Since both the context and the content of this type of user-

generated content on YouTube is different from film and television, it makes sense that this different type of content needs a different regulatory system.

However, risks shouldn't directly be seen as harmful. Research by Mascheroni and Olafsson (2014) concludes that the most common risk online is bullying. The second most common risk is sexual risks. They mention that "less than half of the children who have received sexual messages and of those who have seen sexual content of any kind (on- and offline) have been bothered" (p. 108). Therefore they conclude that more needs to be done to promote more safe and more responsible use of mobile communication for children (p.110). This doesn't mean that al harmful content should automatically be blocked, but that there should be more information available for children and their parents to be responsible online, information that could be given by the users who create the content.

Literature from academics who researched children and their online behavior confirms that children watch increasingly more content online on online video-sharing platforms like YouTube. These audiovisual platforms contain professional and user-generated content and are compared to film and television, watched more in a private sphere due to mobile devices. Research has also shown that children sometimes come across harmful content on these platforms, partly due to the fact that these platforms aren't regulated (yet) like more traditional media. Children are more likely to come across harmful content trough video-sharing platforms than trough film or television. Livingstone et al. (2014) mention that there are parental filters to filter out harmful content, but that they don't work with user-generated content (p. 284). With YouRateIt, NICAM tries to bridge this gap between protecting children from harmful content on video-sharing platforms with user-generated content and the existing age recommendation systems. The following section will explain the regulatory context of this audiovisual market.

2.3. Current regulation of the audiovisual market

The changes described above have changed the audiovisual industry to the extent that previous legislation no longer applied to the whole industry. This section will elaborate on both previous legislation and future legislation. The first section will give an overview of the international trends of the regulation of the media sector. The second section will elaborate on how NICAM has developed as a co-regulatory system in the Netherlands and the last section will give an overview of the advice of academics about these regulatory issues.

2.3.1. NICAM and co-regulation of the Dutch audiovisual market

In the past thirty years, there has been an international trend of deregulation in the media sector. This due to technological changes which have made the media environment more diverse, more competitive and more pluralistic (Napoli, 2011, p. 73). These changes have led to a more indirect form of regulation, which is also called co-regulation. Schulz and Held (2006) give the following definition

of co-regulation, "combining non-state regulation and state regulation in such a way that a non-state regulatory system links up with state regulation" (p. 51). This section will elaborate on how this form of regulation has resulted in a system in which in the Dutch context the state, NICAM and the audiovisual industry work together to protect children from harmful audiovisual content.

Even when the responsibility has shifted away from legislators, legislation is still needed to guide these adults and industries. Carlsson (2006) argues that the focus lies less on the legislation and the responsibility lies more with the parents and other adults:

> But these adults need help in the form of both political decisions and initiatives on the part of the media industry, e.g., codes of ethics and rules that require the industry to assume its share of responsibility vis-à-vis young people. (p. 13)

Rating systems can help parents navigate through audiovisual content and gives the media industry rules to work with and to take their responsibility.

This political trend of co-regulation was visible in the Netherland and in 1999 the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (NICAM) was founded by media sector organizations. With this classification system, NICAM wanted to protect minors from harmful content from more than merely films, but also television, DVDs, and videogames. The system gives audiovisual content an age recommendation and an indicator for the type of content, like sex, foul language or violence. NICAM is both funded by industry and state. The Dutch Mediawet (Dutch Media Act) has provided the legal framework relating to the control of harmful content on television. This Media Act states that programs which might be harmful to children under sixteen years old can only be broadcasted by companies which are affiliated with organizations which are approved by the government, like NICAM. NICAM has set up several rules for broadcasters and cinemas. For example time restrictions when broadcasting sixteen plus material on television. The classification process is watched by the Commissariaat voor de Media (CdvM, translated as the Dutch Media Authority), which is an independent regulatory authority which watches the process and can sanction broadcasters or distributors and can also sanction companies of they don't comply with the rules (Schulz et al., 2006, pp. 71-76). This system is thus supported by both state and industry which indicates the importance of willingness by the industry to participate in such a system.

There are multiple reasons why this system of co-regulation in the media-industry is quite successful. First, because traditional regulation sometimes ignores the interest of some actors, which can lead to resistance by the industry it regulates. Second, it makes smart use of the knowledge and the experience of the industry itself, since they are very involved in their own regulation. Third, it stimulates creative engagement by the industry and fourth, traditional legislation is easier to avoid in these times of globalization. Companies can try to avoid national legislation by moving their offices (Schulz & Held, 2006, pp. 49, 50). These advantages have led to a form of co-regulation in multiple

European states. The system described above still exists today and has remained almost unchanged. The only change that has occurred is the audiovisual industry. However, this co-regulatory system only applies to the film industry and the television industry which leaves the online video-sharing market relatively unregulated.

2.3.2. European legislation

The Dutch co-regulatory system has been proven to be quite successful from the 1990s, but since the new technological developments in the audiovisual sector, it has become in desperate need for change. The European Union has recognized this need for a change of legislation for minors in the media sector on a European level. This section will describe this new legislation and the consequences this will have on the video-sharing platforms like YouTube and on co-regulatory systems like NICAM.

A problem which policy makers had to deal with is the extensiveness of the internet. Jarrett (2008) explains how the protection of under-aged audiences on YouTube has opened up space for less visible video-sharing platforms to exploit this. He gives the example of LiveLeak (another less popular video-sharing platform) which has shown very explicit footage of the Iraq war which has been banned from YouTube (pp. 137, 138). So what we see here is that YouTube has blocked certain content, but that the problem has just moved from one platform to another. This indicates the importance of a system which is transnational and across platforms, since otherwise content creators can skip legislation by choosing another platform (Jarrett, 2008, pp. 137, 138). This also indicates that it is important to have, besides YouTube as a company, also to have the content creators on your side. They can decide any day and any time they want to go to another platform. It is also difficult to define when something is inappropriate or harmful. Especially in an international online environment. The international nature of the internet makes it extra difficult for legislators. There is no regulative international institution (yet).

There are several more practical problems regarding children's rights online. A dilemma for policy makers is finding the balance the between supporting and empowering children online, but not increasing their exposure to risk and harm too much (Livingstone & O'Neil, 2014, pp. 5,6). Another problem lies on the side of the users. How do you know their age? There is no reliable way of age verification (Livingstone & O'Neil, 2014, p. 9). This indicates that is might be more useful to inform audiences instead of the restriction of access, since there is mostly an easy way around those online access restrictions. Another tension is the one between the freedom of expression and protecting children. "Trying to tackle content which is considered harmful to minors may indeed result in unwanted side-effects on the freedom of expression of adults, who should, as a rule, be able to access such content freely" (Lievens, 2007, p. 317) Thus, authorities should be extremely cautious when attempting to protect children from harmful content. There is a possibility that the European Court of Human Rights will perceive it as a form of censorship when authorities aren't cautious enough

(Lievens, 2007, pp. 317, 318). These and other dilemmas and more have created a new European regulation of the audiovisual market.

In 2018, the European Union has decided on new legislation for the audiovisual market. This agreement has been created to protect minors, boost competitiveness and promote European content. In order to better protect minors better from harmful content on video-sharing platforms like YouTube will have to respond quicker if harmful content occurs, they encourage new regulatory systems for these video-sharing platforms. Beginning in June 2018, the member states of the European Union have twenty-one months to adjust this European legislation to their national legislation (Council of the EU, 2018). Since this legislation is on a European level, it partly tackles the extensiveness of the internet. How the other practical problems will be tackled will depend on which systems will be chosen. Nations and industries could follow this new regulation in multiple ways. However, the European Union mentions that upload-filtering systems are discouraged and mention that appropriate measures are functional, easy to use mechanisms for users, uploaders and parents to establish an age recommendation system and a reporting and flagging system (European Parliament, 2018, p. 89). This indicates that YouTube's current system, which is highly depended on upload-filtering systems, probably will not be sufficient. This also means that in the very near future, video-sharing platforms like YouTube will have to create mechanisms for uploaders to inform their audiences and/or mechanisms for the audiences to flag or label content for other audiences. The following section will describe what YouTube's policy on harmful content and minor audiences looks like in June 2019.

2.3.3. YouTube's self-regulation

In June 2019, YouTube has multiple tools with which they try to make YouTube a safe environment. In this section, the main tools which YouTube described on their website will be explained. Their main tools are a mode for adult users, a restricted mode for users between sixteen and eighteen and Kids accounts for younger users. All three options are mostly based on automatic filters. After an explanation of their policies, their policies will be connected to European legislation and research about the regulation of harmful content.

YouTube communicates their guidelines related to children on their website. YouTube has a restricted mode. YouTube communicates that this is "an optional setting that you can use to help screen out potentially mature content that you may prefer not to see or don't want others in your family to see" (www.youtube.com/yt/about/policies/#community-guidelines). YouTube uses different tools to decide which content is mature. For example the title of the videos, the description of the videos, the metadata around the videos and the accounts, the reviews of users and age restrictions. They admit that this has its weaknesses and mention that since it is internationally available, it has international differences and therefore the quality can differ per location. YouTube also offers tips for teens and their parents and supervisors to use their platform in a safe manner. Besides these tips, they have age requirements to create a Google account. In the Netherlands, users have to be sixteen years old to

create a Google account with which these users automatically have a YouTube account, because those are connected to their Google accounts. Users between sixteen and eighteen years old automatically use a restricted mode. But this restricted mode can also be turned on by the adult users and is also automatically turned on when users aren't logged in. In the age-restricted mode, videos with an age-restriction are not visible. Viewers can flag inappropriate content and this will be watched by YouTube's employees and they will eventually decide if this content is indeed inappropriate according to YouTube's guidelines. On their website, YouTube gives the following examples of content which would fall under this age restriction, "vulgar language, violence and disturbing imagery, nudity and sexually suggestive content, and portrayal of harmful or dangerous activities" (www.youtube.com/yt/about/policies/#community-guidelines). The last option with which YouTube tries to protect minors is a YouTube Kids Account. This is a child safe account on which children can watch freely. YouTube gives parents multiple options to supervise their children's accounts and decide what they can watch and what not (www.youtube.com/yt/about/policies/#community-guidelines). The regulation by the European Union doesn't directly mention any of the above-described policies directly but does mention that automatic-filtering isn't the most desirable measure. All the above described ways to protect minors from harmful content are based on automatic filters.

The European Union calls for a system in which the creators or platforms can inform their audiences about their content. They encourage co-regulation and self-regulation (The European Parliament and the Council of the EU, 2019, pp. 88, 89). Since YouTube relies heavily on automatic filters and on its audiences in order to create a safe environment for children, their current tools and mechanism, YouTube most likely will have to adjust their tools in order to comply with these new rules. Throughout the video-sharing industry, there is a focus on technology to tackle the problems regarding harmful online content and is also critical about this and Lievens (2007) describes how these filtering systems could be used in a better way. She argues that a positive aspect of these kinds of systems is a step towards user-empowerment, but it also has multiple flaws. She argues that filtering technologies can help parents decide what their children can watch and what not. But is has to be on a voluntary basis because else it can limit the freedom of expression:

> If filtering software is not seen as an infallible remedy to protect minors against harmful content, but as an empowerment tool which provides parents with the possibility to decide for themselves what content their children can and cannot see, it can be a very useful instrument. (p. 326)

Filtering systems could be used to protect minors, but not in a way in which it denies access for certain people or content gets blocked or adjusted.

Governments have already worked with YouTube and their filtering systems to protect their citizens. An example is how governments used the localization of YouTube. YouTube works with

geo-local filters to offer content adjusted to the nation from which the users use the platform. With this system users receive local content and local advertisements. Burgess and Green (2009) argue how these geo-filters bring a certain tension between national regulation, corporate demands and the brand-ideology of free speech and universal accessibility. These tensions are most visible in nations where there is for example strong legislation against hate speech. These tensions are resolved through content filtering policies with geo-local filters. Google, YouTube and corporate content providers work with national governments to enact content filtering systems. Quietly but effectively the possibilities of YouTube, a very influential part of the online public sphere, have been reshaped. The details or the reasoning behind those decisions remain a mystery to users. Users are confronted with these actions when they all of a sudden can't access certain content anymore or receive incomplete search results. (pp. 86, 87). This form of regulation is non-transparent for its users, but nevertheless still very present. This non-transparency is in line with the neutrality of their brand-identity. YouTube is not involved in the creation process both the professional as the user-generated content and the platform is known for positioning itself as neutral and "open-armed, egalitarian facilitation of expression" (Gillespie, 2013, p. 352). However, the following section will make clear that how they position themselves, doesn't always match their business operations.

Since YouTube is one of the powerful stakeholders in the video-sharing market, they will possibly have an influence on the way in which new age recommendation systems will be created. Through the years they have positioned themselves as a neutral platform which merely offers a space for users to create and share content might sort with YouRateIt which will keep the responsibilities away from YouTube and shifts the responsibility towards the content creators and their audiences.

2.4. YouTube's business model

YouTube is known for being an open and free online community. However, besides being an online community, it is foremost a business which wants to generate revenues. Some participants of this online community have become part of this industry which makes YouTube a complex platform. The first part of this section will elaborate on how YouTube has shifted from being a community-driven platform to a more industry-driven platform and on how YouTube can be both a community as a company. The second part of this section will elaborate on YouTube as an industry and how the actors who have been researched for this research, the content creators, operate within the industry.

2.4.1. A community-driven and industry-driven platform

Since the founding of YouTube in 2005, it has flourished as a broadcaster of user-generated audiovisual content. It was an alternative way of watching television and it was different from television in many ways. The technology was different, the user experience was different, the type of content was different and its business model was different. There are multiple important novelties

compared to traditional broadcasters. First, users can upload their own content and can stream content whenever they want. Another unique feature is that it is also a platform for social networking. Besides this, it also steers video traffic in a different way. Not by programming schedules or information management, but with algorithms (Van Dijck, 2013, pp. 110-114). This has brought a new way of creating, producing and consuming audiovisual content.

Besides the different way of watching audiovisual content, it also brought a new interactive experience. The platform promoted itself as a community-driven platform. Snickars and Vonderau (2009) state that this focus on the YouTube community seems odd at second glance. First, because of the focus on quality content. This, shows in Google's multiple efforts to subsidize the attempts of users to deliver better content. Second, because of partnerships and deals with established media companies (p. 10). This indicates a shift towards a more commercially driven platform. In 2009 Snickars and Vonderau have stated that because of the unpredictable nature of amateur content, only five percent of this type of content carries advertisements (p. 10). Since 2007 YouTube works together with AdSense to share their revenue from advertisements with the creators of the content. Only approved content creators get a cut, how this cut is divided remains unclear (Gillespie, 2013, p. 360). Since in 2019, the majority of the (user-generated) content on YouTube carries one or multiple advertisements, it is safe to say that user-generated content has become way more profitable compared to 2009.

The amount of advertisements accompanied by the content indicates that YouTube and traditional television distributors seem very different, they rely on the same advertisement-supported economic model. Lotz (2014) explains that YouTube's business model changes constantly. In 2014 it was mainly based on advertising and it was experimenting with subscription fees (p. 147). In 2019, an €11,99 subscription fee can be paid if the user doesn't want to see advertisements, wants to download content wants to play music on the background and wants to see certain "YouTube Originals" content (www.youtube.com/paid_memberships). Burgess and Green (2009) argue that monetization has influenced YouTube. They argue how there is a difference between the most popular YouTubers and the rest of the content creators and mention that this is a result of "the monetization of popularity; the success of the YouTube 'stars' is an element of the perception that YouTube is evolving from a community-driven platform to a more mainstream, commercial space" (p. 98). Thus, YouTube has been through a shift from a community-driven platform to a commercial space. Postigo (2016) goes one step further and describes the YouTube subscriptions as "the basic currency in this system. Their recruitment and retention translates into revenue for YouTube" (p. 344). The more popular the YouTuber, the more users will subscribe to their channel and the larges the audiences and thus the more the advertisers will pay for an advertisement in or around his/her videos.

Besides the monetization of amateur content, more shifts have taken place on the platform. According to Kim (2012), YouTube has been through an evolution from an amateur-driven medium to a professional-dominated medium. The television industry has adjusted its strategies to YouTube by

offering its audiovisual content on YouTube or creating their own audiovisual streaming platform. In this sense, YouTube doesn't replace film or television but exists next to it and professional content coexists with user-generated content (p. 61). On this platform professional content coexists with user-generated content. From their founding in 2005 on, the more traditional media industry and video-sharing platforms like YouTube have influenced each other in both directions. Van Dijck (2013) confirms that YouTube tried to be more like television by trying to attract more professional content and that television producers also have adopted features from YouTube (p. 121). While YouTube tried to focus more on its broadcasting features and less on its social networking features, broadcasters tried to be more interactive with their audiences, partly by offering their content on online platforms like YouTube. This has resulted in a platform on which professional and amateur content co-exist.

Since YouTube has top-down control, YouTube should also be evaluated as a very powerful company. Burgess and Green (2009) argue that YouTube has disrupted the existing audiovisual industry and have emerged as a new media power and argue that they have become a fixed part of the mainstream media landscape. They describe how also the media have reframed YouTube's position in the media industry:

> But as YouTube has evolved, so has its role in the cycles of news reporting: from being described as one among a plethora of novel new media applications and a potential site of ordinary self-expression, to its prominence as a threat to media dominance and civil order, and, more recently, as a bona fi de mainstream, if somewhat unruly and under-regulated, medium in its own right. (pp. 15-17)

This could be linked back to the earlier explained media coverage of YouTube as a threat to mainstream media and a threat to children.

YouTube should, therefore, be seen as both a business as a cultural phenomenon. There is YouTube with a business model created by the company YouTube and there is YouTube as a cultural resource which has been co-created by its users. These two very different ideas about YouTube co-exist with each other (Burgess & Green, 2009 p. 35). Those two sides of YouTube are both driven by the industry and driven by the community (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p.11). The following section will focus on YouTube as a company with a business model and will elaborate on the industry around this business.

2.4.2. YouTube as an industry

YouTube should be seen as a commercial business which has both a top-down structure as a bottom-up structure. This section will elaborate on how this industry works and who the actors are besides YouTube. The main actors in this new industry are the content creators and the MCNs (Multi Channel Networks) which are connected to those content creators. YouTube can be defined in multiple

ways and this brings tensions within the platform and the discourse around this platform. According to Burgess and Green (2009) YouTube is experienced in different ways, which they explain as amateur production and creative consumption and this can make the platform quite complicated:

> This openness is the source of YouTube's diversity and reach, as well as the cause of the many clashes between top-down control and bottom-up emergence that produce its politics. ….YouTube illustrates the increasingly complex relations among producers and consumers in the creation of meaning, value, and agency. (p. 14)

YouTube has top-down control on certain aspects of the platform, but also users have some sort of bottom-up control. The distribution is very top-down since YouTube has power over what gets to be distributed and how it becomes distributed. But is also very bottom-up since anyone can upload content (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 6). This has resulted in a complex network of power relations.

There is no gatekeeper anymore who decides what will be aired like there was with television or in the cinema's, anyone can upload content. This results in a power shift, away from professional to users of the platforms and the owners of these platforms (Deuze & Steward, 2011, p. 3). There has been a shift in the way in which media is used. The publishing of media content isn't merely something for a few privileged, but for anyone. Anyone who has the tools can reach the masses and can communicate their ideas with anyone, anywhere, and anytime. (Holt & Perren, 2009, p. 258). This indicates a bottom-up structure, but there is also a top-down structure.

YouTube controls the way in which content is ordered, presented and watched. The users have the power to decide what the content is. However, very violent or sexual content will still be deleted. Postigo (2016) compares YouTube with a roulette table: the bank always wins. Content creators are the bettors, they can decide on which numbers they bet. Some numbers win, some numbers win even more and some numbers lose. But in the end, YouTube always wins (p. 365). Besides an online community and a social media-platform, YouTube is a company which wants to make financial profits. Van Dijck (2009) explains how these economies have evolved just like YouTube did as a platform, from a community-driven practice to an industry-driven practice:

> Labor relations thus shift from a user controlled platform, run largely by communities of users mediated by social and technological protocols, to a company-steered brokerage system, where platform owners play the role of mediator between aspiring professionals and potential audiences. (p.52)

This indicates that even though the platform has shown some signs of being community-driven, the platform has shifted more towards a mediator between content creators, advertisers and audiences.

This revenue model indicates that YouTube is a business which is industry-driven and generates most of its revenue by advertising. Boyle (2016) explains that since its founding in 2005, YouTube has evolved as a well-established commercial transaction model embedded in the video-sharing industry. He explains how despite their seemingly open access there are still intermediaries who are still very important gatekeepers. There is a hierarchy of talents, "with those at the top-end (measured through their popularity, that key online marker of success) measuring the value of talent in terms of its ability to deliver financial reward" (p. 155). Thus, the more popular content creators are and the more income they generate, the more power they have in this industry. MCN's (Multi Channel Networks) helps them with that. Companies like MCN's sell advertisements, cross-promote YouTube channels and develop video brands. But they also make the content formalized to make it easier to sell the content to an advertiser (Vonderau, 2016, p. 362). This indicates these content creators probably do have some similarities and sort of a shared way of working.

Content creators are the ones who keep the platform alive since they produce the content which the other users, the audiences can watch. Boyle (2018) explains how popular content creators on YouTube are closely linked to businesses and brands. He explains that in order to generate revenues and to keep the system flowing, content creators and their teams have to keep on uploading. When a content creator stops uploading on his/her YouTube channel for two weeks, this will result in a direct loss of income not only for the content creator his/herself but also for his/her team and the connected MCN (p. 148). Boyle (2018) concludes:

> What is clear in terms of the top online talent (in terms of subscribers/followers) is that a highly commercial business model has developed relatively quickly across online platforms, with for example YouTube, driven by advertising and closely linked to big brands and corporate business interests. This is also crucially taking place within a significantly more lightly regulated environment than the one within which the UK television sector operates. (p. 149)

Content creators and MCN's thus operate in a highly commercial industry which is comparable to film and television, but not regulated the same way (yet).

These new multichannel networks only operate on social media networks and therefore are not (yet) related to NICAM. There are two reasons why the regulation of this type of producers of content is difficult. First, not all companies are Dutch, which again emphasizes the need for a transnational system. The second problem is the question who should be responsible for the classification of this content, the creator of the content, the multichannel network with which he/she is affiliated with or YouTube who broadcasts the content? Lobato (2016) confirms that multichannel networks are problematic in that sense:

MCN's are unlike anything that media industry research has dealt with before. The automated and scalable nature of their activities means that the MCN industry operates in radically different ways from other intermediaries and without the regulatory frameworks that have grown around them (p. 350).

MCN's and content creators are more difficult to place within the existing regulatory framework and therefore research needs to be done after those new actors.

When YouTube is thought about as an industry instead of an online community, we see that multiple new actors have found their way to this platform which has created a new commercial space in a relatively short amount of time, Also the more traditional companies, like traditional broadcasters or media production companies participate, but also new companies and amateurs benefit from this system The three most important new actors are the company YouTube, MCN's and content creators. However, they have remained relatively unregulated. In order to regulate these new actors, there needs to be perceived how they work and how they relate to their audiences. The following section will elaborate on content creators and their way of working.

2.5. *YouTube's content creators*

The previous section has shown that YouTube is more than an open and free community and a platform on which people can create, watch and share content. It is foremost a company with a business model. YouTube highly profits from advertisements which could be added to professional content but also to user-generated content. This section will focus on the creators of this user-generated content. The first section will focus on what kind of labor this could be seen and the second section will focus on the motivators of these content creators.

2.5.1. *Hybrid forms of labor*

The most visible difference between YouTube and traditional broadcasters is that YouTube contains user-generated content. The following section will elaborate on these content creators and their way of working. There are different terms used for users who upload content, they can, for example, be called "amateurs" or "pre-professionals." It has become difficult to find the line between amateurs and professionals, especially because amateurs can become professionals. The lines between those audiences and producers and between amateur and professionals are challenged by YouTube's dynamics (Lange, 2014, p. 18). This because audiences can be producers and the other way around. However, participatory culture shouldn't be seen as a total shift towards active users who all actively share and create content. Van Dijck (2013) mentions that there is also a shift back in the practices of YouTube users and mentions a shift from the active user to the more passive consumer (p. 115). Therefore the activities from most YouTube users are quite passive and don't differ much from

watching television. This research will make a distinction between active users who produce content and passive users who watch content. The more passive users will be called the audiences and the most active users, who create the user-generated content will be called content creators.

Also, the so-called amateurs can generate income with advertisements or promotion, they can earn financial benefits with their videos and therefore can become a professional. "To understand YouTube's popular culture, it is not helpful to draw sharp distinctions between professional and amateur production, or between commercial and community practices" (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 57) Burgess and Green (2009) take it even further and state that this also counts with labor-based distinctions "the more literal versions of labor-based critiques may not be helpful in understanding the economic transformations that accompany these new models of user-participation in cultural production" (p. 62). They conclude that in order to operate effectively as a content creator on YouTube, it is not enough to internalize conventions about these creative practices like in professional television productions. There are site-specific competencies. They state that this is worth rethinking "the skills that count as literacies are acquired, shared, and learned, in the context of user-created content communities like YouTube" (Burgess & Green, pp. 69, 70). This indicates that there is a new type of labor, which is difficult to place in the distinctions between professional and amateur but is still very present.

Banks and Humphreys (2008) agree with this and explain that "we need to move beyond marvelling at the phenomenon of user-generated content to understanding its place in economic, business and socio/cultural circuits" (p. 402). They explain that we should see these new forms of labor as hybrid social economies These new forms of labor can't be defined in the dichotomy between professional and amateur and commercial and non-commercial. It is a new hybrid social economy and should be researched and handled as such (Banks & Humphreys, 2008, p. 402). The important actors in this hybrid social economy are YouTube, MCN's and the content creators themselves. Boyle (2018) explains how conventional advertising doesn't generate the largest part of the income of content creators on YouTube, "for a million views on a video on YouTube, you can in 2018 expect to earn from £750 to just under £4000" (p. 147). The most revenues are made through branded content. He explains that this is the core task of an MCN, managing brand relationships (Boyle, 2018, p. 147). YouTube could be observed as the mediator between the advertiser, the audiences and the content creator. An MCN could also be observed as a mediator between, but more between brands and the content creators.

Today, YouTube is more industry-driven, but Burgess and Green (2009) believe that YouTube would benefit from more community-led governance. If YouTube wants to be sustainable, they need to take their core users, the creators of their content, more seriously. "It is the participants in YouTube's social network who are producing much of YouTube's cultural, social, and economic value" (pp. 98, 99). The content creators are the core of the business, they create the content which eventually generates revenue for the content creators themselves but also for YouTube and the

connected MCN's. This makes the construction very complex, and if the content creators aren't taken seriously also very unpredictable:

> Above all, what the moment of YouTube highlights is the uncertainty surrounding the future of participatory culture, and the complexity arising from the intersection of various changing and competing ideas about what digital media are, or could be, for. Researchers, practitioners, and critics have an important role to play in thinking through the implications of the current period of turbulence for the future of our media and culture and suggesting alternative possibilities. (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 107)

Therefore it is important to research the viewpoint of these content creators on these subjects and on how they would enact on rating systems to inform their audiences.

2.5.2. Motivations to create content

For television broadcasters and production companies, the motivation to create content is mainly economical since they are a commercially-driven company. Besides public broadcasters, their goal is to serve the public interest. This is different for users who upload content on video-sharing platforms, they have to have different motivations and different circumstances. Especially when having very little views and subscribers, because they don't have the insurance that they will have any audiences and thus no insurance that they will generate any income. This section will elaborate on their motivations to upload their content.

There are multiple reasons for content creators to upload content. Shao (2009) has done research about user-generated content and the motivations to watch and create content and he mentions that users produce user-generated content mainly to inform and entertain others or to trigger responses and participation from others. He mentions that the main motivators for creating and uploading content are self-expression and self-actualization (p. 14). As described earlier, there are content creators who have started as amateurs and eventually economical beneficial. Burgess and Green (2009) also confirm that "in most discussions of user-generated content, self-promotion is assumed to be a principal motivation" (p. 29). For uploading user-generating content, self-promotion, self-actualization and self-expression seem to be the main motivators.

This doesn't mean that these forms of self-expression and self-actualization can't eventually become economically beneficial. Duffy (2016) has interviewed females who worked in digital/social media production which could be conceptualized as amateurs or non-professionalized (p. 445). Duffy (2016) introduces the term aspirational labor. She defines this term as: "a forward- looking, carefully orchestrated, and entrepreneurial form of creative cultural production" (p. 446). These aspirational laborers work for very little or nothing and hope they will be compensated later in their career. She calls them aspirational laborers and they "seek to mark themselves as creative producers who will one

day be compensated for their talents – either directly or through employment in the culture industries" (Duffy, 2016, p. 446). Duffy (2016) mentions that the motivations, efforts, and investments of the participants in her research could be linked to a more widespread trend in media work in the digital economy. "Certainly, the same manic rhetoric of 'getting discovered' has fueled the vast system of unpaid internships, freelance work, and user-generated media content" (p. 454). So besides self-actualization and self-expression aspirations can also be a motivation to upload content on platforms. Banks and Humphreys (2008) also mention future aspirations as a personal goal:

> [P]articipation in these networks may also be a future investment in developing human capital: skills, competencies, and literacies to improve opportunities for participation in these emerging markets and industries. What may at the outset appear to be non-monetary, non-market practices may well eventually provide skills and competencies that can be traded for commercial outcomes – including jobs. (p. 414)

It is not always clear what is being exchanged and what the terms for this exchange are. This means that it wouldn't necessarily be unfair labor (Banks & Humphreys, 2008, p. 414). It is a very different kind of labor from traditional labor with wages and a fulltime workweek.

Sometimes the labor is paid later in their career and content creators first upload for free. Burgess and Green (2009) are also aware of this phenomenon and they mention that YouTube is very well known for its so-called DIY (Do it Yourself) celebrities, **"the promise that talented but undiscovered YouTubers can make the leap from their 'ordinary worlds' to the bona fide 'media world' is firmly embedded in YouTube itself, evident in a number of YouTube's talent discovery competitions and initiatives"** (p. 23). This sounds democratizing, but Burgess and Green (2009) refer to Turner to argue that it is not what is seems:

> [H]e [Turner] argues that the increased representation of ordinary people as potential or temporary celebrities in the mass media represents the 'demoticization' rather than the 'democratization' of the media. Even when ordinary people become celebrities through their own creative efforts, there is no necessary transfer of media power: they remain within the system of celebrity native to and controlled by, the mass media. According to Turner, the 'demotic turn' in media culture relies on the existing structures of celebrity to deliver 'ordinary celebrity' which, far from providing alternatives to the existing media industry, is produced and captured by it. (p. 23)

Even though ordinary people can become celebrities, the power relations haven't shifted and it might be more useful to talk about demoticization instead of democratization. Burgess and Green (2009) describe that YouTube can open up opportunities for the commercialization of amateur content and

thereby can turn amateurs into celebrities. However, in order to become successful as an amateur, they still have to go through the gate-keeping mechanisms of old-media and thus success is not only measured by popularity (pp. 23, 24). In order to be successful, skills are needed and connections with gatekeepers are certainly helpful. Being a popular content creator doesn't necessarily mean being a powerful one, control is still held by the largest companies in the media industry, like Google.

In order to regulate these new actors in this industry, there not only needs to be known what motivates them but also what their economic, political and socio-cultural goals are. Flew (2011) states that even though the power relations have changed and the power distribution seems more egalitarian, we can't depend on those new actors to regulate themselves "even if digital media technologies promise new opportunities for popular engagement and consumer co-creation of media content" (p. 70). Therefore, it can't be expected from these new actors in the media industry that they will work in favor of the public interest and therefore new policies need to be created.

Because the market and the industry have changed, regulations need to change as well. Banks and Humphreys (2008) explain that "user-led production is messier and often driven by a diverse range of motivations that cannot be marshalled into the institutional forms of industrial style production" (p. 415). Therefore, it is important to explore the different motivations and the way of working of these users who produce content. Future research needs to focus more on non-professional creators and how they navigate through and shape these markets (Banks & Humphreys, 2008, pp. 415, 416). Therefore, this research is focusing on exactly those non-professional creators.

The producers of user-generated content probably have started with other motivations than traditional broadcasters and production companies. In the past years, YouTube has evolved from a more amateur environment towards a platform which is dominated by a professional industry. This has created new actors with other interests and another way of working than the more traditional media industry. The following sections will show how the change of the use of audiovisual media and the production of audiovisual media needs new legislation and how these new actors in the media industry need a different approach than previous legislation.

2.6. Protecting minor audiences from harmful user-generated content on YouTube

Technological changes have influenced both the users as the producers of audiovisual content in the audiovisual industry. The internet has changed the availability of content for users. There is more content available than before, which can't all be watched or controlled and checked before uploading. This can be problematic for children since they can come across harmful content more easily than was the case with television and film. It has become more difficult to control what they are watching since everything is relatively easily and more privately available on mobile devices. But it has also become easier for users to upload content and become a content creator or even a professional themselves. The boundary between professional and amateur have become more vague and these changes have created new online industries, like YouTube. YouTube has started as a community-

driven platform but has evolved towards a more industry-driven platform and both content creators and YouTube generate the main part of their revenues from the advertising industry.

Due to these changes, regulatory systems, like the co-regulatory system in the Netherlands, don't only have to deal with professional producers and distributors of content, but also with users uploading content, the so-called content creators. These content creators operate in an industry around video-sharing platforms like YouTube. This industry is highly focused on advertisements and both amateurs and professionals can generate revenues with their content. This asks for a new way of looking at content regulation and the media industry as a whole. The European Unions has already announced the legislation, so NICAM and other similar institutions in the European Union will need to find a way to advance children's rights on YouTube in a successful way In order for a new co-regulatory system to be successful, it needs the willingness from the industry and it would be helpful if there was a way in which content creators could successfully be part of this new regulatory system. Therefore this research focusses on relatively little researched content creators to explore their viewpoints and opinions

3. Research design

This chapter will describe the design of this research and the methodological choices that have been made. The first section will explain the choice of method, interviews. The third section will explain under which criteria the ten participants have been gathered and recruited. After this, the fourth section will elaborate on general information about the sample and other relevant information about the participants. The fifth section will explain the interview topics and the operationalization of the interview schedule. The sixth and last section will describe the coding process.

3.1. Choice of method

This research is based on data gathered from ten semi-structured interviews with Dutch content creators active on YouTube. Respondents were recruited via their content information and via word of mouth. All ten interviews were digitally recorded and conducted and transcribed by the same person. The ten semi-structured interviews took approximately forty-five minutes and were located at their preferable location. Nine interviews were conducted at the respondents home, work place, or in a nearby area in a coffee shop. One interview was held through a video call.

The choice was made to answer the main research question with ten semi-structured interviews because this research was looking for opinions and the views of Dutch content creators on YouTube. And at the root of in-depth interviewing lies trying to understand the experience of other people and trying to understand how they make meaning of these experiences (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). As described earlier, these content creators are a new actor in the industry and haven't been researched much. As Van Dijck (2009) mentions, labor relations have shifted towards a situation in which there are platform owners, in this case, YouTube, content creators and audiences (p. 52). The content creators are new in the industry and can be anything between non-professional and professional. This research was aiming to learn more about the viewpoint of these new actors which function between the platform and the audiences. With interviewing, this research wanted first, to find out how Dutch content creators on YouTube experience the possible harmful effects of their content and of the content of their colleagues on their younger audiences and second, how they would relate their own practices in to content regulation systems. Interviews give access to their way of thinking which hopefully provides a way to understand their behavior a little more.

3.2. Recruitment of the participants

The goal of this research was to better understand YouTube content creators, their way of working, and their thoughts on protecting minors from harmful content online. However, there multiple different kinds of content creators on YouTube. Therefore, decisions needed to be made and this research used purposive sampling. This means that the sample is non-random and consists of multiple cases which are highly specific and difficult to reach (Neuman, 2006, p. 273). Five

requirements have been created to make this sample successful and the data as rich as possible. These five requirements are nationality and language, attractiveness for children, activity, subscriptions and data richness.

Since this research will only focus on Dutch content creators, the first requirement is nationality and language. This because NICAM is a Dutch organization and therefore is interested in the Dutch YouTube environment. The European Union has given the European nations the option to decide for themselves how to implement this legislation (Council of the EU, 2018). This means that European nations can make different decisions on this. If the system will be implemented, it will be most likely be implemented in the Netherlands and therefore only content creators with Dutch origins and the use of the Dutch language where used. Eventually, this system could be used internationally and NICAM and YouRateIt do recognize that ratings for children are highly culturally specific and different inputs in the rating system, would result in different recommendations in different nations (www.yourateit.eu). Since this research is not about the cultural sensitivity of rating systems and in order to avoid major cultural differences between interviewees, the decision has been made to focus only on Dutch YouTubers.

The second requirement is attractiveness for children, NICAM's regulatory system is created to protect children from harmful content, so it would be sufficient to interview content creators which would have to deal with children in some way. The interviewed content creators all have children as (part of) their audience. This doesn't mean that children were explicitly their target audience or that their audiences mainly consisted out of children. But as criteria, it had to be likely that children could come across this content. Since YouTube doesn't share its audience behavior, this is based on likeliness and therefore, YouTube channels about subjects which are seemingly less interested for children have been avoided. For example pages about, professional careers or parenthood.

The third requirement was activity. Since this research is about a future plan and the video-sharing platforms have until 2021 to create a new rating system, the sample needed to consist of content creators who aren't planning to quit anytime soon, since their opinion could probably be more indifferent since they are sure that they don't have to deal with this system in the near future. Therefore, YouTubers who haven't uploaded for months haven't been contacted. To be sure that no participant is planning to quit anytime soon, potential interviewees were asked this before planning the interview.

The fourth requirement was that all interviewed content creators should have a certain amount of subscribers. To be sure that not only their friends and family watched, but the minimum amount of subscribers was held at five hundred. Since content creators with a different amount of followers might have different opinions, it was tried to approach content creators with different amounts of followers in order to get as rich data as possible.

The last requirement was the richness of the data. The data had to be as rich as possible and therefore the sample of content creators had to be diverse. The fifth and last requirement is a diversity

of offered content. Since the focus of this research lies on possibly harmful content, it would be very sufficient to try to select content creators which offer a variety of different types of harmful content. So when approaching interviewees, there was a focus on different kinds of content. The aim was to have at least one interviewee who has had at least once violence, sex, drugs or alcohol in his/her content. Also, people without harmful content where approached, since also these content creators would have to use this system if this would be implemented.

Participants were contacted through their available contact information on their social media accounts. Since they are very active online and most have an e-mail address available for corporations and press, there were multiple channels through which they could be reached. In addition to their available information on their YouTube account, most content creators have accounts on multiple platforms like Facebook and Instagram and are known to be very responsive on these accounts. When there was no e-mail address available or they have found to be nonresponsive, the content creators have been messaged through these social media platforms. By contacting them by sending them messages through personal messages via their Instagram account and/or Facebook account. The aim of this research was is to start with approaching the most popular ones. Since they were most likely to be more difficult to reach. This was easily measurable trough likes and followers. When the most popular content creators weren't willing to participate, content creators with fewer followers and views would be approached and so forth. The approached content creators were found to be very non-responsive and over one hundred content creators were contacted. Therefore, the sampling relied on the respondents their network and snowball technique.

	Name	Gender	Age	Subscribers	Genre / content description
1.	Edward	Male	30	21.000	Challenges, travel vlogs. Q&A's and more
2.	Fred	Male	23	85.000	The soccer videogame FIFA
3.	Andrew	Male	21	8.000	Challenges, (travel) vlogs
4.	Peggy	Female	39	1.000	Activities, sketches and more. All together with her three year old daughter
5.	Lisa	Female	20	8.000	Fashion, lifestyle, and vlogs
6.	Brandon	Male	30	750	Street interviews, questions and dilemma's
7.	Jeffrey	Male	23	450.000	Videogames and vlogs
8.	Patrick	Male	26	49.000	The soccer videogame FIFA and content related to the soccer club he is affiliated with
9.	Aaron	Male	29	44.000	Mental health and personal development
10.	Dennis	Male	24	21.000	Challenges and vlogs

Figure 1. – Description of the sample

3.3. Participants

The sample includes ten YouTube content creators. In order to anonymize the interviewees, their names have been changed. Eight of them are male and two of them are female. Their age was between 20 and 39 years old and on the moment of interviewing (April/May 2019), they had between 750 and 450.000 subscribers. The content creators are all Dutch natives, live in the Netherlands, and create content in the Dutch language. The content creators have different educational backgrounds. Some haven't finished their education because of their YouTube career, one was still in college, five of ten had a college degree (MBO in Dutch) and two had a degree in applied science (HBO in Dutch). Seven out of ten interviewees have had an education which was focused on media and three out of ten have followed an education with a less clear link to the media industry. Figure 1 shows an overview of the participants. The genres and the description of their content are described in the same manner as the participants described their own content. The amount of subscribers is collected on the day of the interview with the participant and these numbers have been rounded up.

3.4. Interview schedule

To answer the question how YouTube content creators would feel about an online content rating system to inform audiences below seventeen years old about possible harmful content, ten semi-structured interviews were held with a duration of approximately forty five minutes. These semi-structured interviews where based on a topic list. This interview schedule was divided into two sections. The interview schedule can be found in appendix A. Since the interviews where held in Dutch, the interview schedule has been translated from Dutch to English.

Before each interview, an introduction to the subject has been given. In this introduction, there was explained how NICAM operates and how children are protected against possible harmful television and film content with Kijkwijzer. After this, a brief explanation was given about YouRateIt. Since this research aims to find out how people would feel about such a system, the system was introduced at the beginning of the interview. However, since it would also be useful to get explore their opinions about other solutions, this explanation was very brief hoping not to influence their own creative ideas and opinions. After the explanation of YouRateIt, a regulatory context was given. In this introduction to the subject was said that the European Union has decided on new legislation which will be put in force in 2021. It was also mentioned that this new legislation asks for a new system since the current system on YouTube probably wouldn't be enough since they heavily rely on algorithms and bots. It was made very clear that it is not a question if there will be a new system to inform and protect minors, but what this system will look like. Therefore the questions were more focused on how and not on if there should be better protection of minors. YouRateIt was the only age recommendation system about which full and clear information could be given. Therefore, in the introductory part, it was made very clear that this new age recommendation system doesn't have to be YouRateIt and that

in the near future, it could also be another system created by another organization or by YouTube itself. The introduction was dependent on the knowledge of the participant and gave general information about NICAM, current regulation and future European regulation. An exemplary introduction can be found in appendix A.

All the participants were promised anonymity and signed a consent form. In this consent form, the researcher promised anonymity and the participants agreed to let their words be used for research purposes and for orientation for NICAM. Their names are anonymized, but it was also made clear that it might be possible that they could be traced back since they all speak about their content which is easaly accessible online. Besides this, it has been made very clear from the start that this research is not an invitation for the interviewees to give their demands. It has been made clear from the first moment of contact with the participants that this research is purely for the purpose of obtaining information about their viewpoint. NICAM and YouRateIt don't have the intention to meet any demands and thus the actual outcome of this new regulatory system could be different than the result of this research. This was all explained in the contact prior to the interview.

The interview schedules consist of three parts. The first part of the interviews contains more general questions. Partly for interviewees to get familiar first. Their own content and how they view their own content will be discussed first because it is best to start with the topics your interviewee is enthusiastic about and feels comfortable with to make the interviewee feel comfortable (Hermanowicz, 2002, p. 488). This information has been used to gather general information about the participants and to get a clear first impression of the interviewees. After the more general questions, the interview shifted towards the second part, which aimed to answer the first sub-question. The first sub-question is: what do these content creators think about their own content in relation to their possible underaged audiences? With this question, this research wanted to see if and/or how the standpoint from the content creators might differ from the earlier described standpoints from NICAM, media scholars, and the European policy makers. As described in the previous chapter, scholars and European policy makers agreed that YouTube and other video-sharing platforms should have better protection tools for children. The European Union has shown its concerns with creating new legislation (Council of the EU, 2018). Scholars have done research about user-generated content and mentioned that the second most common risk for children online is the exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content (Livingstone et al., 2011, p. 7). NICAM has also shown their concern by creating a system to protect children from possible harmful user-generated content. This part of the research aimed to find out if content creators share this concern and why (not).

The third part of the interview schedule aimed to lead to the second sub-question: under what conditions would YouTube content creators participate in an online content rating system? This question aimed to find out how new regulatory systems could be implemented best. How do they work and how could this system be implemented and how can they voluntarily participate in this new system? As described earlier, power relations have shifted away from professional to users of the

platforms and the owners of these platforms (Deuze & Steward, 2011, p. 3). As Flew (2011) mentioned, we can't except from these content creators to regulate themselves since they might have other political, economic or social goals than the public interest (p. 70). This research focusses on the content creating users of these platforms (p. 70). However, in order to regulate this new actor in this industry, we need to know what motivates them and how they work. Questions were asked about YouRateIt and other possible rating systems, about if they would be willingly to participate in such as system, how much time they would spend on the usage when in their process it could be implemented best, and how they would use it. The advantages and disadvantages of such a system were discussed together with their own possible solutions to these problems. In order to influence the opinions of the interviewees as less as possible, the details of the system were left as open as possible. The number of questions and the number of time spent on such a system, for example, were left open to see what they would find acceptable. So, at some points during the interview, the interviewer had to explain certain concepts and had to explain the context which could have influenced the interviewee. To minimalize the influence of the interviewer, the interviewer tried to give explain these concepts as neutral as possible without bias.

3.5. Coding

All ten interviews were audio taped and eventually transcribed by the author. The interviews were held in Dutch and transcribed and analyzed in Dutch. The transcripts have been analyzed with the use of thematic analysis. The thematic analysis has helped to reduce the data to reoccurring categories and themes (Roulston, 2010, pp. 150-151). Braun and Clarke (2012) describe thematic analysis as "a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set [thematic analysis] allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences" (p. 57). Braun and Clarke (2012) mention thematic analysis with which the researched can identify how a topic is commonly talked about and making sense of those commonalities to in order to produce an answer to the research question (p. 57). Therefore, this research has used thematic analysis to discover the viewpoints and the way of working of the participants. The aim of this research was to find out where these opinions come from, what might bind them and getting a better understanding of their practices and the meaning-making of their own practices. Therefore this thematic analysis has had an inductive approach. Which is "a bottom-up approach and is driven by what is in the data. The codes and the themes derived from the content of the data themselves – so what is mapped by the researcher during analysis closely matches the content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 58). And thus the main themes derived from the data and not from the literature.

The first step in the coding process was creating codes for reoccurring themes. A code is "a word or a string of words used as a name for a category generated during analysis" (Boeije, 2009, p. 95). After familiarizing with the data, a coding list has been created. A reoccurring theme in this list is

for example finances. This means references to their financial status and the (potential) income they make from their practices on YouTube. Another reoccurring theme was responsibilities. This code entails comments about where the responsibility lies. Harmful content is also a reoccurring theme. This code was defined as the respondents' definitions or thoughts about what harmful content means. These developed codes have been adjusted and revised during the coding process. All data is used for the analysis and has been under multiple cycles of analysis, which Silverman (2011) describes as the comprehensive data treatment (p. 379). Eventually, twenty seven codes have been created, these codes can be found in appendix B.

After the creation of these twenty seven codes, these codes were divided into five main categories. These categories where monetization, audiences, professionalization, YouRateIt and lastly there was a category with the remaining codes which were used in all other categories. Those main categories are very intertwined, nevertheless, codes which were dominantly in one category where put in that category. In the first category, monetization two codes were very dominant. Numbers and finances. However other codes also very often referred back to finances or numbers. For example their motivation, their way of working and their content or other YouTubers' content. The second category, audiences, consisted of nine codes about their relationship with their audience. This category is about their relationship with their audiences and how their content or their way of working is or is not adjusted to their audiences. The third category is professionalization. This category consisted of six codes. Those codes were career, motivation, media industry, YouTube, other rating systems and the advertising industry. Most participants saw certain trends in the industry which they followed as well. This implies some sort of professionalization. The fourth category is YouRateIt. Those codes are fully focused on the rating system proposed by NICAM. This category includes four codes: effort, effectiveness, sanctions and practical. This category is very intertwined with the categories described above since their arguments for why it would be effective/ineffective or why they would put more or less effort in this system were mostly related to monetization, professionalism or their audiences. The last category is also very intertwined with the other categories. This category includes general information about their background, their content, other YouTubers and their personal opinions. See Appendix C for an overview of these described categories.

After an analysis of the five main categories, it became clear that there are three main themes: monetization, professionalization and responsibility. These main themes will be further described in the following chapter. Since all interviews were held in Dutch, all quotes used in the result section have been translated. They have been translated as directly as possible and culturally specific sayings or contexts are explained as throughout as possible.

4. Results

4.1. Introduction

The data from the semi-structured in-depth interviews with the ten participating YouTube content creators reflected that YouTube content creators do have some similarities in their motivations and ways of working. An analysis of the data has resulted in three main themes: professionalization, monetization and responsibility. The first theme, professionalization, derived from the observation that the participating content creators all have a different professional and educational background and thus another relationship with the professional industry. What they (do) have in common is that they all have a conscious relationship with the professional media industry. The second theme which has derived from the data is monetization. All content creators have talked about their content and the revenues they do or do not generate from it. The third and last theme is responsibility. This theme is very much related to YouRateIt and their opinions about this system and less with the theory about user-generated content and the protection of minors. The results of this research will be divided into these three main themes and every chapter will discuss one of these themes, starting with professionalization, moving onto monetization and closing off with responsibility. The last section of this chapter will elaborate on how all of these themes are connected.

4.2. Professionalization

The first theme which rose from the data is professionalization. However, the term professionalization is very indistinct because, as described by Burgess and Green (2009) no clear distinction can be made between a professional and an amateur (p. 57). The participants do have links with the professional media industry, but it is less about being a professional and more about their career goals or their work or educational history. This section is divided into three parts. What became clear first, is that most content creators did see their channel as a stepping stone for their career. All content creators their practices on YouTube has some sort of relation with their aims in the professional media industry. The second part will focus on their way of working, which seemed spontaneous, but also showed signs of being very structural. The second part will focus on how they view their working environment.

4.2.1. YouTube as a stepping stone for their career

Without specifically asking for it, a significant amount of respondents mentioned that they would like to work in the media industry professionally. Seven of the ten participants have followed or are currently following some form of education in relation to media, so these seven participants were in one way or another already working on a professional career in this industry. For example Lisa, a twenty year old female who just finished her degree in media design and especially likes to edit

videos. She works as a cashier and the cinema and occasionally works as a presenter for this cinema's online platforms. She says the following about her current situation, "it is fine. But off course, you hope to grow a little more." Dennis also has his professional goals. He created his YouTube account in 2011 for a college assignment and continued with uploading videos after this assignment and hasn't stopped since then. About his career goals he says the following, "well, I always liked filming and stuff. So I, eventually it would be nice to, someday, to help create a film or something like that, do the filming, that would be very cool." Another example is Peggy, she is thirty nine, calls herself an entrepreneur. Together with her husband she owns multiple businesses, mainly in media and communication. After some busy years, Peggy decided to have a more quiet schedule and around one year ago she started uploading videos on YouTube with her daughter. She already has a career in the media industry and thought this would fit in perfectly, "Yes, and then I thought, oh yes I can do this. I have, as a photographer, I have everything. I have a studio, I have a camera."

Also participants without a media related education or work history said that they wouldn't back up for a professional career in YouTube. For example, Brandon, who is thirty years old and works with disabled children. "But if there would be a moment on which I could earn money with it, yes, then I wouldn't say no to that." Even though Brandon doesn't have a background in the media industry, he wouldn't back up if the opportunity came. Besides Brandon, Andrew also said that he pursues a professional career in the media industry. Currently, he is studying for a degree in sports, but he says he doesn't want a career in sport, "and I do as less as possible related to sports because all the internships I do because I am doing an internship at a radio station right now." Despite the fact that he is an active uploader on YouTube and seems to pursue a career in the media industry, he doesn't seem to admire a career on YouTube. "I like it when people watch my content, but I don't have a goal with this, I don't have to have a certain amount of views." Despite not having a clear goal with his YouTube channel, he seems to have clear goals career-wise.

Some participants did have a clear goal with their account. One respondent, Jeffrey, hasn't even finished his degree because of his career on YouTube. He is the most the most popular YouTuber of all participants. He focusses on gaming and has 450.000 subscribers. For three years Jeffrey studies informatics, but when he felt it couldn't be combined with the practices on YouTube anymore, he quit, "and I have dreamed of this, so I wanted to do it. And then I have made the decision to quit school temporarily, but temporarily became…actually became quitting permanently." Jeffrey isn't the only one who has decided to focus fully on YouTube. Filmmaker Aaron also made a similar decision. When asked if he has an occupation besides YouTube he said, "not anymore at this time. No. I decided to focus on this channel because actually, I want to let it grow." He is a significantly less popular YouTube content creator with less than one tenth of the subscribers Jeffrey has, around 44.000, but even with that amount of subscribers, it apparently could be enough to make a living.

The majority of the participants already came from some sort of a professional media environment. Some are more experienced than others and they all have their own goals and

motivations. Some respondents have made a career from YouTube, others have aspirations in other sectors within the media industry. This motivation for starting a YouTube channel could be linked to the term aspirational laborers by Duffy (2016) since multiple participants, just like the aspirational laborers, hope to be compensated for their free labor later in their career (p.446). They all seem to have some relationship with the professional media environment which could indicate that despite self-actualization, self-promotion and self-expression, there are other motivations which are related to being professional and generating revenues

4.2.2. Being a YouTube professional

The previous section showed that all respondents have in some way a link with the professional media environment. However, this doesn't indicate that they work professionally or more amateur, or what working professionally means according to these participants. Defining when someone is a professional and when not, seems like an impossible question to answer. As Burgess and Green (2009) have stated, in order to research these content creators, it might be better to let loose the dichotomy between amateurs and professionals (p. 57). To get a better picture of the participants' work and if they could be placed in this dichotomy, in this section, the participants' way of working will be described.

Most YouTubers describe a way of working which at first, seems unstructured and very spontaneous at first. Most have said to work spontaneously without a clear plan. Fred for example, says that most of the time, he doesn't have a clear plan, "but nine out of ten times I just put my camera on, take a look at the reactions, what have they said? What, what is there to do. I just come up with something" Lisa also doesn't start with a clear plan, "just. Filming and documenting random things." Besides being spontaneous and improvising, the participants have also shown indicators that, next to working spontaneous, they also work very structured. Lisa confirms that, "But, it is a little bit fifty/fifty, because for example, in In the Closet of [a series in which she interviews other YouTubers in their clothing wardrobe], I have my questions which I prepared of course" Eight of the ten participants have some kind of upload scheme, whereas some are more strict in this than others. Aaron explains why he uploads every Monday at four p.m. exactly:

> Because that just works the best in the system. Which is quite twisted sometimes, you can barely take a day off. Yes, YouTube is, if you just don't upload for a couple of months, then you disappear from the algorithms and on a certain moment, your audiences, they are also directly gone.

He states that the algorithms of YouTube kind of force him to be strict. This shows how YouTube has power over in what way content creators upload their content. They have to follow YouTube's rules if they want to be found by audiences. YouTube has the power about how and when content gets

distributed and therefore the distribution is very top-down (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 6). This indicates that in order to be successful, certain skills are needed and thus some sort of professionalism is needed. Like Burgess and Green (2009) argue, YouTube content creators on YouTube can't just copy the conventions learned in other sections of the creative industry. In order to be successful, they have to learn skills which are very site-specific (pp. 69, 70). And apparently, one of those site-specific skills is having a strict uploading scheme. But there are also other skills, like collaborations. Dennis explains that "collaborations work very well, yes. Through this, your channel can grow very hard as a beginner." This indicates that there seem to be skills which you can use to make your channel grow.

Not all content creators seem to be very strict on those unwritten rules. For example, Peggy, she is less strict in time and date, "we try to upload a video every week." However, it could also be that this is one of the reasons why she is not that successful (yet) since she only had one thousand followers at the time of interviewing. Others don't let themselves be guided by audiences and/or algorithms but by the gaming industry. Three of the interviewees uploaded content about videogames and all three mentioned that they let themselves be guided by the gaming industry. Patrick and Fred create content about the soccer videogame FIFA and both identified themselves as professional FIFA players since they generate income with playing these videogames. They play for soccer clubs and these clubs have besides their regular soccer players, also e-sport players playing for them. These e-sport players play FIFA, a soccer videogame, for their team against other teams and other e-sport players. Patrick and Fred explained how they play professionally for a soccer club and how these professional FIFA players have certain schedules. Patrick explains his schedule as the following, "always in the weekends. Because we always, at the weekends, we have to play the FIFA competition and I always stream that. So then I have reason to upload. This is mostly on Friday, Saturday and Sunday." He lets himself be guided by the program created by the videogame FIFA.

Fred has since he plays the same videogame as Patrick, a similar upload scheme. Despite having a strict scheme, he said that he still works very unstructured, "I just come up with something. And I am really. And, and that is also the funniest thing ever because when I don't have a clue what I am doing, it mostly gets better views." Jeffrey, who could be categorized as a professional YouTuber since he made a career out of his gaming YouTube channel, also works with a strict scheme. But despite the fact that he is very strict in his uploading scheme, he keeps the actual content of these videos very open, "the videos, the gaming videos have a lot of improvisation. I know which game I'll be playing on which day, but I don't know what de video will look like. No idea." This summarized best the way of working of most content creators. There seems to be some spontaneity in the content itself, but as the participants talk about when they upload content, most participants have some kind of schedule.

The participants with the most subscribers have said that their income is dependent on their YouTube channel seem to have a more strict scheme than participants who are not financially dependent on their YouTube channel. However, this isn't related to their professional goals. Andrew,

for example, has clear goals in the media industry, but isn't very structured, "I don't have a strict upload rhythm." But he does believe that having a rhythm is important if you want to become a successful YouTuber, "I believe that eventually most YouTubers who want to be really successful, they have to look at that eventually, like, okay how am I going to upload it, what are the times." This indicates that even YouTube has its own conventions which users follow in order to become successful. Since there is no clear line between being an amateur and a professional this dichotomy is still not useful.

The data has shown that the participants' way of working isn't especially like an amateur or like a professional. Despite the participant's words that imply that they work spontaneously and improvise, their working schemes show exactly the opposite which is structure and repetition. The upload structure of these content creators is based on their audiences, on YouTube's algorithms and on other extern factors like the gaming industry. The people who could be categorized as professionals, do not clearly have another way of working than the people who might be categorized as amateurs, but they do seem to follow certain rules.

4.2.3. A professional and transparent working environment

Multiple participants linked being a professional to being open and informing towards their (minor) audiences. This section will elaborate on how being professional, and having rules to work by, is related to informing children about harmful content. Transparency seemed to be a central theme. Edward describes why he believes transparency is very important, "I believe that today really, there are YouTubers who … indirectly are paid by the people wo watch. So, there is also an interest in being just some sort of transparent." According to Edward, because people generate revenues with their content, all involved parties should be open and transparent about how they work. This is something which is more often seen in the data, for example when the participants talked about promoted content.

Jeffrey says he follows the rules of the social code. The Social Code is a Dutch solution to regulatory issues regarding misleading advertisement, especially for children. This is an initiative of eighteen Dutch YouTube content creators to be more transparent about their online advertisements and their collaborations with companies. They have set out some guidelines which they have signed to follow. There are guidelines on how content creators could show in their subscription or in their video when something is promoted by a brand or organization. There are also guidelines to follow when they get products or services for free or when they actually just paid the full price for it like anyone else would (https://www.desocialcode.nl/). This initiative also has other goals besides protecting children from harmful content and is purely self-regulatory. Jeffrey explains why he follows these rules:

Because surreptitious advertising is really bad and those people promote things without
informing their audiences that this is promoted. That shouldn't be possible. I always use it

[The Social Code] but just because I believe that is more honest. I want to give that honesty, that transparency to my audiences.

Jeffrey thus wants to give his audiences honesty and transparency. Aaron also works with the Social Code and describes why he supports the Social Code and other systems to create more transparency, like YouRateIt:

I believe that it is good because informing is always good. That things are clear, just like with the Social Code, that it is clear that it is a commercial, that is what I support. Let's just be transparent about it.

This indicates that some content creators are already consciously informing their audiences about possible harmful or misleading information. However, this is focused on informing children about the commercial goals of the content and not informing children about the harmfulness of the content.

Not all content creators work with the Social Code, but also content creators who don't, have a positive stance on transparency. Peggy, who doesn't work with the Social Code, also mentions that "more transparency is always better." Edward goes even one step further when talking about transparency he states that it is a trend, "It is, yes, it is just part of the whole thing. Especially for the people who get paid for it." And he even links it to working professionally, "why, if you work at YouTube, wouldn't there be certain rules to follow?" This indicates that if these content creators want to be professional, which they all appear to pursue, this industry shouldn't be immune to rules and regulations. This is an audiovisual industry, just like film and television and all industries have rules." There seems to be a link between being professional or aspiring to be a professional and being transparent. This form of transparency has been linked to informing audiences about commercial content but has also been linked to informing children about possible harmful content.

4.2.4. Their relationship with YouTube

Although most participants believe that more rules and more transparency are better, some participants noted that it doesn't mean YouTube will have more rules and will be more transparent. Multiple content creators have mentioned that they don't feel that they have influence in the decision-making process of these kinds of matters. This section will elaborate on the participants' viewpoints on YouTube.

Most participants have said things that indicate that they see YouTube as a very powerful company and multiple participants think that YouTube would not be willingly to participate with YouRateIt, Aaron said, "I really wonder how if they can get this done with YouTube, because I don't think they are an easy party to deal with." From these words, it can be interpreted that he believes YouTube is powerful enough to decide for itself if they want to participate, despite new legislation

which might force them to. Andrew is also skeptical, "it is not practical for YouTube, so I don't believe they would corporate easily." Brandon has a similar opinion, "they are not going to do it. I am going to honest with you. They are not going to do it." It seems like Brandon and Andrew believe that YouTube will have a choice. Since multiple participants referred to YouTube like the actor with the most power, it becomes visible that YouTube is the most powerful actor according to them and not the state which develops new regulations or the users who create the content. Burgess and Green (2009) argue that thanks to platforms like YouTube, the way in which ordinary people become celebrities has changed, but not the power structure behind those celebrities (p. 23). This was also clear in the way in which these interviewees talked about YouTube.

Besides being a very powerful company, YouTube is also seen as a neutral mediator between advertisers and content creators. These ways of thinking are in line with YouTubes communication since YouTube positioned itself as "open-armed, egalitarian facilitation of expression" (Gillespie, 2013, p. 352). Some participants have linked this neutral position of YouTube to their possible position in age recommendation systems. Brandon for example had the idea to let YouTube check if content creators have filled in their age rating systems correct, "so actually, should you fill in the form, and they [YouTube] should check it afterwards." Jeffrey has a similar opinion, "YouTube could check that. If you fill in that form, that YouTube checks, like oh, did you fill this in correctly?" This indicates that they accept the position of YouTube as a neutral mediator. However, beside a facilitator for an online community, they might forget that YouTube should foremost be seen as a company with financial goals.

Jeffrey has also almost forgotten YouTube's financial goals and comes back from his opinion that YouTube should check if content creators fill in their age recommendation correctly. He wonders if YouTube should get access to these age ratings and describes it as a company which is besides a seemingly neutral party, also as a very non-transparent company. "Is YouTube's algorithm going to run off with this? Because YouTube's algorithms aren't going to promote a video with which they can't generate revenues. Because that would mean that YouTube isn't going to earn money." With this, Jeffrey is referring to the monetization of YouTube's content, which will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter. He also gives a solution to this problem of non-transparency from the company:

> This is very important. I really believe that… Or you should make it a thing which stands on itself. For example, what you can do is, this questionnaire, if a third party, you can put it on a website, and you can fill in the questionnaire there and then there will be a result. And that result, I can put that result on my description on YouTube.

He believes that it would be best if the age recommendation system would not be hosted on YouTubes website, but would be created on another website. According to Jeffrey, this might makes it less likely

that YouTube will use the system for financial reasons. Aaron also mentions that this company is very non-transparent, "because right now I have, I have that, my income is suddenly sixty present less than, two months ago." He doesn't know why but he can't fix it and this makes him feel powerless, "no, you are very dependent. You are very dependent on the platform. And they don't react to everything, which is logical of course because there are so many channels. I understand." This indicates some type of uncertainty. He doesn't know what YouTube is doing with the algorithms around his content and the income which he generates with his content. He is powerless since he can't reach the company and is uncertain about his future. This indicates that they work in a system, but don't control the system much. This confirms what Burgess and Green (2009) argued, that YouTube controls the way content is distributed and organized (p. 6). Both the literature about YouTube and the participants say that YouTube is a very powerful company. Their dependence on this platform should be taken into account when analyzing their speech about YouTube or informing audiences. However, their power should not be overestimated. Together, the content creators could form an influential power group which could practice influence on the system as a whole. An example is the Social Code which was also a bottom-up initiative from Dutch content creators themselves without approval or interference from YouTube.

It is also important to note, that these content creators don't only work within YouTube. They also operate on other platforms. For example Edward, "I don't put a video online every week, because I also show a lot of content on Instagram because I like to share things, then I combine it a little, Instagram and YouTube." Fred agrees, "How I profile myself, that is not only on YouTube, also on Instagram." Ilse even says she generates more revenues on Instagram then on YouTube, "I have had assignments, but I don't really earn money with that, not much, but I do more things through Instagram." Since Lisa generates more revenues from Instagram, she could decide to focus fully on Instagram. This indicates the need for a system which is across platforms.

What becomes clear when looking at the theme professionalization is firstly, that it is not helpful to draw a sharp distinction between amateurs and professionals, or between commercial and non-commercial content (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 57). These two dichotomies are already problematic with ten YouTube creators, let alone if this would be researched on a larger scale. This is also very visible in these results. All content creators have some link with or some goals within the professional media industry, but all in a different way. Most have some sort of a professional or educational career in the media industry and others are aiming for this kind of career. Most work spontaneous and structured at the same time. Being structured could be linked to being a professional since the financially dependent content creators seem to be more strict, but this doesn't apply to all content creators. Almost all content of these content creators are in some way monetized, all in a different way. Transparency is a popular theme and seems like something all content creators wouldn't mind to be more transparent. Most participants have said that they think transparency is a something positive and have related that with informing audiences about harmful content. However, they also feel very much part of the system and follow YouTubes rules. Since monetization seems to be a

dominant theme throughout the speech of the participants about their way of working, this has become a theme on itself and will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section.

4.3. Monetization of user-generated content

The second central theme within the data is finances. YouTube has created a business model in which the monetization of user-generated content has been made possible. In 2009, user-generated content was seen as being unpredictable and only five percent of user-generated content carried advertisements (Snickars & Vonderau, 2009, p. 10). Today, YouTube has created more possibilities for creators of user-generated content to monetize their content and this section will elaborate on how and why they generate income from their YouTube channel and how that is related to protecting children from possible harmful content. Multiple participants rely financially on their incomes from advertisements or the promotion of products or organizations in their videos. Others wish to generate more revenues from YouTube. Only two of the ten participants didn't have financial goals with their YouTube channel. Six of the ten participants state that their YouTube channel is a substantial part of their income. This section will elaborate more on the financial aspect of YouTube.

4.3.1. Generating income with YouTube

In the previous section, it became clear that career is a substantial part of the motivation of content creators to create content. But also enjoying doing it is described as a motivator. Most content creators have said that they mainly do this for fun. "Now I do it purely because I like to do it and I am curious, very curious" (Brandon). "And the reason why I do this is because I like to do it" (Jeffrey). "But at the moment, I just do what I like to do" (Dennis). Fred just finished his degree in commercial economics and his income depends on YouTube and his work as a presenter and commentator on a sports channel. He gained 85.000 subscribers in a year and wants to profit from this while he still can:

> Look, there are just 60.000 to 70.000 people watching and you can earn so much money with that. And, and that is just it, study and other things, I just don't do that. I am just going to save a lot, buy a house in Rotterdam and we will see. And if everything stops, then I'll just work in marketing or something else.

He is the only one who says he doesn't pursue a career in the media industry but admits he solely does this because it's fun and it pays well. This indicates that finances could also be seen as a motivator for creating content on YouTube as a non-professional. Only Fred has mentioned it as his main motivator, but others have also mentioned the importance of the financial aspect.

Most of the participants have stated that they generate some income with their content, but not enough to live on. "I also just work at the cinema. Just as a job, because well yes, I get something now

and then. I mostly receive stuff. … Which is fine. But you also hope to grow" (Lisa). Dennis has a similar situation, "I do earn something, but that is not really the amount where you say yes, I can live from that." These participants do generate revenues, but not enough to fully rely on.

Other earn more with their practices. Like Fred, Jeffrey and Aaron, they solely live from their income generated from their YouTube channel and their practices around that channel. Edward explains that he generated a part of his income with it but always had another job on the side, "I always used to work besides it. But, no I've never lived from it. Unfortunately no." Two participants, Brandon and Peggy, don't generate revenues (yet) with their content. However, this doesn't mean that they don't aspire to do so. As stated earlier, Brandon wouldn't mind doing this professionally. Peggy, however, didn't mention finances and has other motivations, "So no, we actually don't earn money with it. Het is more, purely fort the fun and... The other approach is for her [her daughter] development." Two of the ten content creators don't generate income from their practices, three participants can live from their YouTube channel and the rests of the participants are divided somewhere in the middle. The two who don't generate revenues also are the less popular ones with respectively 750 and 1.000 subscribers to their channel. The four content creators who are financially dependent on their channel also have the most subscribers; 44.000 (Aaron), 49.000 (Patrick), 85.000 (Fred), and 450.000 (Jeffrey). This confirms the common idea that the more views and subscribers a channel has, the more income it can generate and that these two factors might be related. From this angle, it makes sense to compare YouTube subscriptions as currency in this system, like Postigo (2016) did.

Despite that multiple content creators have said that they create content just for fun or for being creative, nine out of ten of the content creators have also said that they have some financial goals with their content or wouldn't mind having (more) financial benefits. Only Peggy hasn't mentioned her finances once. This indicates that finances are a central theme for these participants and that their financial situation should be taken into account when considering changing their way of working by implementing an age recommendation system.

4.3.2. Advertising

Both YouTube and its content creators financially rely on advertisements. Thus, one important reoccurring subject within the theme monetization is advertising. This section elaborates on how content creators experience this dependence on the advertising industry. User-generated-content has become profitable and this has created a high focus on numbers like views, likes and amount of subscriptions. YouTubers are "indirectly paid by the people who watch" (Edward). Dennis explains how advertising and sponsor deals come with a certain amount of followers. "They often say with one hundred thousand, then the advertisers come, then they say do you want to promote this and that. So, that is where I want to work towards." Besides YouTube and the advertisements through AdSense, also for corporations with brands, the number of views and subscribers are important. As described

earlier, most content creators pursue some sort of a professional career, which indicates that finances seem to be a central part of their motivation to upload content and to gain audiences.

Multiple participants have communicated that this financial system might be problematic in combination with a rating system. The first problem is that this system might influence the advertising industry. Jeffrey explains how he believes that advertisers will look at the age recommendations:

> Advertisers do look at that. They think like, oh this has a stamp for eighteen plus, yes then I will not, promote these stuffed animals for twelve year olds below this video. Something like that you know. Or I think that Pepsico, this is one of the biggest advertisers on YouTube, they will think that this is for an older target audience, this must be pornographic, let's not advertise here, this is bad for our brand.

He believes this system could only work if advertisers couldn't be influenced by this system. He believes that otherwise, the content creators would find a way to manipulate the system in order to generate more revenues:

> In order to find out what the impact is, and you will check, then you will find out, oh okay this video is now sixteen plus or eighteen plus, and oh I earn thirty percent less on this then on other regular videos, oh and here I earn eighty percent less. That is strange, that doesn't make sense. I don't want to hand in money. Okay, so if I fill in the questionnaire this way….

He would only participate seriously if he would be completely sure that this system wouldn't disadvantage him financially. As described earlier, his solution to this problem would be an independent system which fully stands on itself, without interference from YouTube and/or advertisers. He calls this an impartial stamp and believes it would be better not to put this in the hands of the creators or YouTube. Other YouTubers can also imagine that this could have a financial impact but they link this decrease of income to the decrease of views. The number of views and the number of subscriptions could go down, which could eventually lead to less income from advertisements. "Yes, the biggest disadvantage for the YouTuber is of course that, they might lose views and subscriptions" (Patrick). "I believe that now and then, you can lose views and that you will have less, that your videos will be less successful" (Dennis). However, it doesn't have to be a problem, since children could decide to watch it anyway despite the age recommendation system. However, it is difficult to estimate if content creators would lose views and subscriptions.

This indicates that YouTube content creators need a certain amount of subscribers and views in order to generate revenues. This also indicates that some content creators might can't afford to lose subscribers or views since this could influence their financial situation. These content creators are dependent on advertisements and the industry behind those advertisements. An unwanted result of an

age recommendation system could be that the advertisement industry could base their future decisions on this system. The participants fear that this could result in a situation in which videos with higher age recommendations could receive less advertising revenues. The following section will elaborate on another way how this advertising industry can influence the content of the YouTube channels of these content creators.

4.3.3. Adjusting content for more income

Some participants said that they have adjusted their content for financial reasons. Jeffrey says he has two reasons why he tries to watch his cursing, "look, it, sometimes I, sometimes I watch my, I watch my cursing a little bit more. And that has two reasons. First, of course, my target audience. But the second reason is also because advertisers don't like that." Jeffrey even says that YouTube already works with a similar system as YouRateIt. But then solely for monetization:

> I know that YouTube is already working a lot with those kinds of, age rating systems, what they do is secretive, they give an age stamp to your content, so you, they see.. you can't see that for yourself. It has already been proven. And, on the basis of this age stamp, they can go to advertisers and say okay, this is a video for sixteen year old. And if you are not all ages, than it just becomes less. This has been proven and we can't do anything about it.

He also says how he deals with that, "so, that is why it is better to leave out your fucks and shits and pay attention to what you do." This would mean that YouTube content creators are already censoring themselves in order to generate revenues.

Besides adjusting the content, also the length can be adjusted. Aaron adjusts the length of his videos to the advertising possibilities:

> Mostly yes, mostly a quarter of an hour. Yes. Yes. Mostly, fifteen minutes is what it takes on average. Mostly above the ten minutes, but that has to do with advertisements. Else you can't insert advertisements, so you can make a little bit more money with your videos.

Multiple participants adjust their content to the monetization of the platform. This could be done in multiple ways. Adjusting your content so that it could be more appealing to the advertisers or so that it is longer so that more adds could fit in one video.

Other respondents see another way to deal with harmful content in relation to monetization and that is profiting of its harmfulness. This isn't something they have admitted doing themselves, but something they have seen with other content creators. When talking about other YouTube content creators, multiple participants have stated that there are content creators who create content with a significant amount of sex or violence in order to attract more audiences:

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Yes, they do a lot of those clickbait titles, but also a lot, anyway a lot of those, channels and companies and stuff, they try to get a lot of clickbait. They do a lot…, with sex and violence and those kinds of things… I don't think that, for example, the Telegraaf [a Dutch newspaper known for clickbait articles and videos] or something like that will get big trouble. If they have to do this [YouRateIt] because then a lot of the things they do will be sixteen plus. (Aaron)

These channels get extra audiences by focusing on clickable subjects, for examples sex and/or violence. Aaron believes those YouTube channels will have a problem when an age recommendation system would be implemented since those channels also have younger audiences which might no longer watch their content it has an age recommendation.

Others confirm that this type of content is being watched by children and could result in less income if this type of content gets an age recommendation. Like Dennis and Patrick who, like discussed in the previous section, have said that this could cost views and thus income. Fred likes to be edgy in his videos and talks about sex and drinking and swears. He says he doesn't want to adjust his content to children or wants to inform children and that he wouldn't mind if he would get a lower income because of a high age recommendation. But by saying this, he also indicates that he will lose income with this system:

I just rather have no income, than that, that, that is the conclusion I have, yes. Yes, I believe it, yes I don't know. Yes, I just believe it goes too far and it just isn't worth it. Because with ten years, you are just way too young [for his content], then you are still in primary school.

This implies that sometimes a choice needs to be made between having young audiences and thus generate more revenues or being transparent about harmful content. Dennis also mentions that despite the fact that some harmful content is monetized, this doesn't have to mean that they generate more revenues. He explains that he knows people who do have a channel on YouTube focused on dangerous challenges. They have a significant amount of followers and views because of the attractiveness of their content, but a significant amount of their videos are labelled as eighteen plus by YouTube because of the dangerousness of their content. This has had a substantial influence on their financial status and therefore he doesn't believe that an age recommendation system would influence them, *"because they almost had a million subscribers, but they earned almost nothing. Because all their videos were demonetized. And a lot of age restrictions. So their channel was already not much fun for YouTube so to say."* Because they are already demonetized by YouTube, an extra age recommendation system probably wouldn't influence them that much more. Thus, there are multiple ways in which content creators deal with the monetization of their user-generated content.

The content creators who have generated income by focusing on violent content, swearing and/or sex, might have a hard time when an age recommendation system is implemented. However, this is difficult to estimate since there is no overview of how much revenues are generated from which content. Besides, it is also difficult to estimate if this age recommendation system will influence watching behavior since children are still able to watch anything they want, it is just a recommendation.

4.4. Taking responsibility towards minor audiences

The third theme extracted from the interviews with the participants is responsibility. This section will elaborate on the viewpoints on their responsibilities regarding the protection of younger audiences. In the previous sections became clear that participants have shown that they would like to be more transparent, but only if this doesn't influence the advertising industry and thus their revenues. This section will elaborate on who they believe that holds the responsibility and how far they believe that their responsibility goes for a safer online environment. This section will start with the participants their definition of what is harmful and what not. The second part will elaborate on how they relate to their audiences and the last part will explain where they find the responsibility lies in this story.

4.4.1. Defining harmful content

While talking about harmful content it first needs to be defined what is harmful. The definition of harmful is dependent on cultural sensitivities and personal norms and values. The definition of harmful is constantly under negotiation (Schulz & Held, 2006, p. 52). For YouTube content creators, it is most likely that they will not decide for themselves what will be evaluated as harmful and what not. This is, for example, the case with YouRateIt when uploaders can fill in a questionnaire which will result in an age recommendation based on research and on years of experience by NICAM. It would be unlikely that content creators would decide for themselves what is harmful, however, it is useful to see what their definition is of harmful content since some have said not to be willingly to participate if they don't agree with the results.

These ten content creators all have a different view on what is harmful and what is not. As described earlier, Fred doesn't want his minor audiences to be watching his content. According to him, his content is not suited for those audiences. However, he also believes that a little bit of swearing wouldn't be harmful to a child since they already know the words:

> And if I say to people of fifteen, sixteen years old nowadays hear, like 'tering, tyfus" [Dutch swear words, both diseases], or del Porno [he calls one soccer player del Porrno because his last name sounds like the word porn] or I don't know what else. That is nothing.

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Aaron has a similar opinion, "I am not going to watch my swearing and those kinds of things. No. I am a Roterdammer, and those people swear. Yes." Besides swearing, there is another form of harmful content which the participants all mentioned, challenges. Andrew doesn't see the harm of dangerous challenges, "that children will copy you, yes, that happens a little with everything. Then you can block anything. Yes. Yes, because when I will jump in a pond it doesn't mean that all children will follow me directly?" He believes that children can also estimate for themselves if it is safe to copy this behavior or not. Brandon does street interviews and says that he doesn't edit out when people swear or speak about sensitive subjects in his videos, he wants to portray the people on the street as they are. "Well, I don't believe I make very, harmful content. I just make, how I see it, realistic content." Brandon believes that harmfulness is defined differently when merely reality is documented in for example an interview.

Other participants make a division between positive and negative content. When asking the question about what is truly harmful, most content creators didn't specifically talk about their own content, but about the content of others. They didn't only find certain content harmful for younger audiences, but harmful for everyone, regardless of age. Fred, for example, says that hurting other people is his boundary. He talks about 'treitervloggers' which are vloggers who bully random people on the streets, "Those are just very, very nonsocial. They just hurt people constantly. And they are, literally, just torturing people. Just, very bad. Yes, this really makes me angry." Lisa agrees and mentions how harmful roasting videos are, "Even though it is very often, they say between the lines like it is just a joke, but you know, you are still roasting people, and twelve year old children are also watching." This indicates that some content is seen as harmful for everyone, not only children. This also indicates that there are new genres like roasting videos and treitervlogs which might be more difficult to place in the system created for film and television.

Others don't have a clear definition of harmful content and mention how subjective it is and how the harmfulness depends on the context and the person watching this content.

> So yes, you know. They are all people, and the one finds this scary and, it is also very, some things are just very individual I suppose. And I think that you can't, you can't take everything and everyone into account. (Peggy)

This confirms how difficult it is to define the word harmful. Besides Peggy, also Andrew finds the term harmful content very subjective, "you have of course those people who, who are raised very freely and don't look up quickly. And there are people who, just, are kept awake from the smallest things." These subjectivities wouldn't have to be a problem since the age recommendations are just recommendations and people wouldn't be denied access.

Others confirm the difficulty of defining harmful and say that they would find it problematic of their definition didn't match the definition used by the organization who set the system up. Dennis seems to be reluctant to work with an age recommendation systems. He already has his doubt with how YouTube labels his content as potentially harmful and thus eighteen plus:

> Yes, I have, for example. One time, I reacted to the porn film of Rapper Sjors [a Dutch rapper but most known for doing and saying dumb stuff]. Yes, he made a porn film. I had blurred everything and stuff, so it wasn't offensive at all, but you saw directly how the age thing was put on so it was eighteen plus. This happened only after fifty thousand views. Which I find bizar. … But on the other side, it [YouRateIt] does create more safety, maybe yes I, it is unfortunate if it happens with a video where you think, where you find it unjust. So I would say, then I would find it unfortunate.

As Dennis describes it, the choice what is harmful and what not doesn't lay with the content creator, but the impact does, since they have to deal with the label and the effects this label has on their channel. Dennis describes that today, YouTube decides and possibly in the future, creators of systems like YouRateIt will decide what is harmful and what is not. As Burgess and Green (2009) argue, the current policies co-created by YouTube, and (local) government are very non-transparent, since the users and the content creators don't know the exact rules but merely know that content gets blocked or gets an eighteen plus rate (pp. 86, 87). Since no content gets blocked with YouRateIt and the rules are more transparent, this system might be easier to accept for content creators than the current policy by YouTube, but the system could also be rejected by those content creators.

Some content creators have even said that they would manipulate the system if they didn't agree with the outcome. Jeffrey describes the requirements for him not to manipulate the system:

> And I believe it will go like that very quickly. That people or creators in this respect will very quickly fill in the questionnaire in w way that it is always good. If, like, if it will have an impact on, on the advertisers. Suppose it is only an indicator for the audiences, then the advertisers won't look at it. But this is unlikely, but you never know. Then, then I would do it seriously.

He would only fill in the truth if he would be one hundred percent sure that it wouldn't impact his income. Andrew says something similar:

> Yes, Yes, I believe that yes, I don't know. I think it is not going to work because there are just enough people who think in views and money and think yes… maybe sexually content appears, but well, I just fill in zero. Like that.

If children couldn't access or aren't allowed by their parents and/or supervisors to have access to their videos, the number of views and/or subscribers will go down and this might eventually result in less income.

Despite the earlier described positive notes about transparency and about YouRateIt, most content creators say that they find it difficult to believe that such a system would work because the definition of harmful is so subjective and the system might not be accepted by all creators. There might be content creators who don't agree with their given age recommendation and decide to fill in the questionnaire differently in order to get the age recommendation they agree with.

4.4.2. Audiences

All content creators have different audiences, and all content creators have a different relationship with their audiences. For come content creators, the majority of their audiences are under-aged and for others, the under-aged audiences form only a small fraction of their total audiences. Some do mind that they have younger audiences others don't. In order to make a statement about the relationship between the participants and their audiences and their willingness to inform their audiences, it should be made clear who their audiences actually are according to these content creators. This section will elaborate on how the participants relate to their audiences and how they think about them.

The first interesting note is that most participants don't work with a target audience like in, for example, television but that their audiences are more something which seems to overcome some of them. For example Andrew, " I didn't really have a goal, just that everyone can watch and eventually you will find out what your target audience is." Lisa states the same when talking about her audience, "yes, I had, I had no idea. I didn't really know what I was making. And I didn't know for who, I just made things." Dennis also didn't decide for himself who watches, "but, it is around fourteen or sixteen, around that age. That is what I experience. If I, for example, if I come across someone, then it is hey Dennis, then I think, oh yes, that is my audience." He knows who his audiences are because of the people he has met in person. All participants have stated that they focus more on responses from their audiences then on the analytics offered by YouTube. Patrick explains why, "hmm I can check [what his audience is], but it is, it isn't correct at all, because, a lot of those children are on the accounts of their parents." He also explains how he knows it doesn't match, "yes, you mostly notice it because, because of the reactions or something eh yes. That, that is something a thirty year old wouldn't do. No, those are always very happy comments or very childish or...." Lisa also builds the idea around her target audience on the people she has actually met, "I notice that, that those [the fifteen year old girls] are the girls I have actually, I have physically seen. That is some sort of confirmation that they exist." Most participants base their ideas about their audience around what they

have seen, but aren't focused on the age like the television and film industry does with target audiences.

However, some participants do have some sort of target audiences in mind. Like Fred, he describes how his target audience doesn't match with his actual audience. In his videos he makes more mature jokes about for example sex or alcohol and says the following about the minimum age of his content, "I think I would want around fourteen years old" To be more sure that he has no younger audiences he uploads late in the evening, "I upload only after half pas ten in the evening. Then I am sure that a certain target audience is still awake." However, he also admits that this doesn't always work, because, after the moment of uploading, his content is still available every day on every hour Aaron also has a clear target audience which is adults between eighteen and thirty five years old, "I have never, I never went for the kids target audience." He seems to have some sort of a target audience and did have an audience in mind when creating his content.

For the participants, the idea of audiences seemed more difficult to define than like for example with television, where content is created with a target audience in mind. The difficulty lies in the idea that most content creators haven't chosen their audiences, but at the same time are financially dependent on these minor audiences. Jeffrey describes this struggle:

> Perhaps, look, it is a little, it is a little bit what this world is like. The internet is open and everyone can see what they want to see, but it is, it is better for me to keep an eye on it. But at the same time, I haven't chosen my target audience, it has always been like that.

Partly, Jeffrey tries to adjust to his audiences, but partly he also believes he should stay himself and since he is an adult, this consists of practices or speech which might be inappropriate for younger children. Others also show this struggle in their speech. Fred doesn't have this struggle and chooses authenticity instead of being appropriate for all ages:

> So I, sometimes I am just calm in my videos and sometimes I have videos from which I think yes, this is not appropriate and then yes… On the other hand I think that it is something which you should exactly do. End then I think, I, I do it for myself and not because I want to take six year olds into account.

Fred thus feels like he shouldn't take every part of his audience into account because that is just not who he is making it for. Not all content creators have this struggle. Peggy explains how she believes she just doesn't do anything which she might evaluate as harmful, "you know, it is also not my nature. We are not people who, that language, who use that language, in the, in the surrounding of a child. Or do crazy things, yes, no." She doesn't show dangerous or scary content and it is just not in her nature to swear and is always creating content with her daughter.

Thus, an audience on YouTube is something more complex than a television or film audience. An audience of a YouTube content creator is something which might has overcome them instead of a conscious decision and can be quite different from what they were hoping for when starting their channel. However, some content creators do have a clear audience in mind and have made clear decisions in this. Some content creators adjust their content to minors, others do this more for the advertisers and others decide not to adjust anything. The reasoning behind those adjustments lies in their opinion about responsibility. The following section will elaborate on their opinions about responsibility towards younger audiences.

4.4.3.The responsibility of informing about harmful content

There are multiple ways to deal with harmful content and younger audiences. Today the content creator has the option to adjust its content so it wouldn't be harmful or the option to inform their audiences about their content with a disclaimer or in their subscription. The third option is an adult label. Then YouTube denies access from accounts below eighteen years old. Creators can label themselves, but also YouTube can label content when they receive multiple complains. Another option is a kids account, however, content creators didn't have much experience with this since this is more a tool for parents than for content creators. Besides this, it has only existed in the Netherlands since February 2019 and doesn't work optimally yet (van Teylingen, pp. 58, 59). All informing systems have been discussed with the participants.). The systems about denying access or blocking content haven't been discussed since it is not in their hands and is less favorable since it can lead to unwanted self-censorism.

Some participants adjust their content for their advertisers. However, there are more reasons for content creators to adjust their content. Also, Lisa adjusts her content. But not for the audiences, or the advertisers but more just because she doesn't like swearing:

> And I, what is it called, I, I curse now and then, but that, or I just edit it out, or I insert a bleep, then the word is gone. But well, you still know the word has been used.

The reason for these adjustments of the content she gives, "I just believe it is more chill if I leave it fully out." Besides Lisa, Brandon also adjusts his content for another reason. He says he has to reckon with his professional life since he works with disabled children:

> But you know. I have to have a statement of good conduct for my work. So, you have to keep that in mind. If, if, imagine I would do something very stupid, then that could be withdrawed and I wouldn't have work.

He doesn't want his YouTube channel to influence his professional career. As described earlier, also Jeffrey adjusts his content. He mainly does this for his younger audiences, "I just, it, it is sometimes, I do, I do watch what I say, I do watch out with cursing. This has two reasons and one of them is the target audience of course." He describes his target audience as very young.

Others say that they already inform their audiences about possible harmful content. Dennis confirms that there already is an atmosphere on YouTube where content creators inform their audiences about possible harmful content, "but you see that a lot, that YouTubers do this. With warnings and stuff, that when something happens which they shouldn't imitate, then there is immediately a warning like don't do this at home." He confirms that he does that himself, "that is why I honestly said, don't do this at home. Because well, and then some people say, why do you upload it? Well, because it is fun. But therefore the warning beforehand. Yes." Others also do this. Aaron, for example, does this as well with content he believes can be shocking, "yes, but I also say that in the title, that it will be a heavy subject" He gives an example of a video about sexual assault and mentions that this warning was for everyone and not just children, "it is always for adults, yes. I am not… yes, because I am not, no, because I am not assuming children will be watching." Since he doesn't want to make content for children, he doesn't feel that he has to inform children if they would accidentally watch his content.

Most content creators are positive about informing audiences. "That would be a good one, that you just do it as a YouTuber. Just warn the audience a little bit more" (Dennis). Informing is mostly linked to the parents and not to the children. Aaron mentions how he believes that parents should be responsible:

> Yes I, I believe that it is not really content for them [his own content], but yes, if they want to watch it, they must decide for themselves. I did receive an e-mail once, of a parent or something, that they don't let their child watch our content, because we swear so much. And then, yes, we have sent back that we, we don't make, I believe it is already special that your child watches my content because it is really not made for them.

Dennis has shown a positive opinion about informing audiences, but indicates in the quote above that he doesn't feel responsible in the end. This standpoint on responsibility is something all content creators agreed about, no content creator has said that he/she felt responsible in the end. But this doesn't mean that they don't want to show effort. Aaron says the following about this:

> Then, from then, like if those logos [YouRateIt] will be installed, then parents also have the responsibility about what their children watch and they have to make clear, this is, these are the channels which you can, which you can watch.

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Peggy agrees, "I believe as well that definitely, a part of the responsibility lies with the parents themselves." Peggy isn't the only one who believes that parents are responsible:

> Well yes, in this case [YouRateIt] it, it is without a doubt like, clear what you are watching, so then people know what they are watching. And then it is up to the parent, or anyway, it is fully the responsibility of the parent of course. (Andrew)

According to the respondents, parents are thus responsible, and not the content creators themselves. Jeffrey believes the group who benefit the most of this system are the parents, "the biggest advantage is that the parents of the audiences and the audiences themselves, I think that mainly the parents of the audiences can get an indication of what kind of videos their children are watching." He also believes that parents should have been more involved in this. "What is the child watching? No idea. So a lot, a lot of parents just don't know what their child does on the internet. And I believe that should change." Another reason why the responsibility lies with the parents and not with the children is that children can still decide to watch the content. "But, I don't really care if I, yes, but, you can inform them, but it doesn't really help, because they will watch it anyway" (Fred). However, they also state that informing is better than doing nothing. "You can still watch the content, you definitely can, but at least you warned them" (Edward). Some even say an age recommendation system might work the other way around. "But I think, seriously, that it encourages children to watch it. Children, because it says sixteen plus, they think like oeh… Yes, I want to see that" (Aaron).

Edward explains how he just doesn't want to be responsible himself, "but then it is up to the audience indeed what they what they click away and what not, but then you, as a YouTuber, have sort of built yourself in." Which could be linked to transparency. These content creators aren't all convinced it would work, but they all wouldn't mind being transparent towards children and their parents. They don't especially feel responsible if their audiences see content which they might be too young for, but they do all feel some kind of responsibility to be transparent.

However, since they don't feel responsible in the end, the system also shouldn't cost too much time, since times seems to be scarce for these participants. Some have an occupation on the side or have a strict uploads scheme. So, they all say that it should take as little time as possible, "Not too long. Two minutes. Two minutes max." (Fred). All ten content creators agreed on the moment where this questionnaire should be implied. This was as the moment of uploading when you have to wait until the video is processed by YouTube:

> Because when I upload a video on YouTube for example. Then it takes quite a lot of time before it is fully loaded. And in that period you have to make a title, your subscription, the texts, how you want to generate revenues, you can, you have to fill in a lot, which language it

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is, which game you play. Well, you have to fill in all that. So, mostly, during that time of uploading, that would be a perfect moment. (Patrick)

Since all content creators agreed on this, this would be the most desirable moment to ask about harmfulness. Peggy says that she, because she makes content with her child which is always suitable for children, she would like that the questionnaire remembers her answers and that she can just press next without looking at the questions again, when she makes a video which is different she can change it back:

But I rather have a system, in the back-end, in where I only have to click on the check marks once, and then it just stands ready whenever I come back. And when I have a video for which it needs to be adjusted, I can change just one check mark.

For users who don't produce much harmful content, it would be very practical if the system would remember their previous settings. It would also save a significant amount of time for all content creators since most content creators have reoccurring themes and thus reoccurring kinds of harmful content like swearing or talking about sex or drugs.

4.5. Professionalization, monetization and responsibility

The three main themes, professionalization, monetization and responsibility towards minor audiences are all connected with each other. All content creators seemed to have some connection with the professional media industry. Some have followed or are following a media related education, others have a media related work-history others have these aspirations or are have managed to make their YouTube channel a full-time job. There seemed to be a set of skills which seems to result in more success on YouTube. Part of these skills is having a clear upload scheme and collaborating with other YouTube content creators. However, all content creators still have the spontaneity where YouTube is known for. Multiple participants have said that transparency should be a part of this set of skills and wouldn't mind being more transparent and therefore being more open about harmful content. Being transparent is important to them, but they don't feel totally responsible. In the end, the responsibility lies with the parents and the supervisors of the children and not the creators of the content.

Monetization was also a central theme which has derived from the data and this theme sometimes opposed itself against transparency and willingness to participate. Monetization is mostly used as an argument for ineffectiveness or unwillingness. Since both YouTube as the content creators rely on advertisements and cooperation with brands, it would be unbeneficial, to say the least if age recommendation systems would have an influence on their income. Some participants even said that they wouldn't be willingly to participate in an age recommendation system if this influences their revenues.

Multiple participants spoke about adjusting their content. For their minor audiences, but also for advertisers or just for themselves. It isn't preferable if content creators adjust their content to what is preferred by younger audiences or by advertisers, this could lead to some kind of self-censorship and brings tension with our freedom of expression. When dealing with harmful content to younger audiences, it should not be that the side-effect is that adults can't access this content as well. When content gets deleted or changed on a large scale, this could even be perceived as censorships by the European Court of Human Rights (Lievens, 2007, pp. 317, 318). Therefore, this subject should be handled with care and it would be advisable that before implementing an age recommendation system, the effects are researched and content creators can be sure that both audiences and advertising companies will not be influenced too much by this system. At least not that much that it changes their subscribers, views and thus their revenues.

5. Conclusion

5.1. *Main findings*

      This research has gathered data through ten in-depth interviews with Dutch content creators on YouTube. Those content creators have been asked questions about how they work, how they create their content and how they relate to their younger audiences and how they feel about the harmfulness of their content and content of others. Besides this, they have been asked questions about their willingness to participate in rating systems like YouRateIt. An analysis of the transcripts of these ten interviews has resulted in the following findings.

      The interviews with the ten content creators on YouTube have resulted in three main themes: professionalization, monetization and responsibility. These themes are very intertwined and are all three related to each other. The ten participants all had different ways of working, different motivations for creating content and a different relationship with their audiences. This confirms that the creation process of user-generated content should be evaluated differently from the production of more traditional media like film and television (Banks & Humphreys, 2008, p. 2014). Content creators have shown to be complex and have a significantly different way of working from the mainstream media industry.

      Despite their differences, the participants also have things in common. They all seemed to have professional goals or already fulfilled some professional goals in the media industry like work-history or an education. Some seem to hope to be compensated later for their free labor and seem to do some kind of aspirational labor. Besides their professional goals, most participants seemed to have mastered some set of skills which made them more successful on YouTube. This skills are solely applicable to YouTube and are not related to their practices besides YouTube. This complicates the division between amateur and professional content and therefore, this dichotomy seemed to be inefficient. Transparency was also argued to be part of being a professional content creator and all content creators mentioned that they wouldn't mind being more transparent and informing their audiences. Some even mentioned that it should be part of the job. However, they feel like they are not the ones in power and they talk more like followers in a top-down structure than leaders in a bottom-up structure. And thus, according to these content creators, an age recommendation system most likely would only work if YouTube or legislation would take the lead. However, when the participants talk about the Social Code, which was an initiative from content creators themselves, it becomes clear that it is possible to start a bottom-up movement which better informs audiences. This indicates how complex the power-relations are within the platform YouTube.

      All content creators were positive towards the idea of more transparency towards their audiences and had positive thoughts about the effectiveness of such a system. However, their main doubt was with the effects on their financial situation. Monetization of their content played a central

role for the participating content creators. Generating revenue is a central theme in the data. Most of the participants didn't mention finances as their motivation to upload their content on YouTube. Only one participant mentioned that the big revenues are his main motivator. However, eight out of ten participants did generate revenues from their content and four of them even made a living from it. This indicates how the monetization of their content should be reckoned with when implementing an age recommendation system. Participants have shown willingness to participate in the project, but not if that would be at the expense of their income. This indicates that their financial benefits are evaluated more important than being professional and transparent. Both the data and the literature indicate that YouTube is an industry-driven platform.

All content creators showed to have a different relationship with their audiences. Most content creators have an audience which they didn't specially choose but more the other way around. Their audiences choose to watch them. This results in a way of working in which content creators don't especially work for a target audience but more for their peers or just general audiences. Some don't mind to have younger audiences, some do, some adjust their content to these audiences, some don't. All participating content creators have experience with minor audiences. Some don't mind if children watch their content, some don't really see them as their target audience, and others do mind them watching and want them out of their audience. They all believe that certain harmful content shouldn't be watched by minor audiences and do believe a system to protect minor audiences on platforms like YouTube is needed. However, their definition of what is harmful differ. They don't believe in restricting access and do believe it is the responsibility of the parents to keep an eye on their children and their online activities.

The main question this research aimed to answer was how YouTube content creators would feel about an online content rating system to inform audiences below seventeen years old about possible harmful content. In order to answer this question, this research was divided into two sub-questions. The first sub-question was about what these content creators all think about their own content in relation to their own underaged audiences. The data has shown that the term audience is more complex in relation to user-generated content than in relation to film and television. Most content creators haven't chosen their audiences and just have embraced whatever comes their way. Some don't mind having younger audiences, others do. Most content creators who do mind to have younger audiences wouldn't mind an age recommendation system, since they don't find their content suitable for all ages and wouldn't mind not having those audiences. Those who don't mind to have younger audiences or (partly) focus on younger audiences sometimes have tension between adjusting their content for these audiences and remaining their authentic self. For these content creators, an age recommendation would be helpful since they could let the system decide what is suitable instead of having to think about this themselves. But this could also mean that they lose a part of their audiences since they might not watch their content anymore or aren't allowed anymore by their supervisors or parents. And thus content creators who have children in their audiences could lose revenues, which is

definitely an unwanted situation since this would influence their willingness to participate but also their content since they might adjust their content to a broader audience. This could lead to unwanted self-censorship. Another unwanted outcome of an age recommendation system would be that content creators don't accept their outcome since they have a different definition of harmful. So, both the definition of a (target) audience as the definition of harmfulness complex and differs from creator to creator.

The second sub-question aimed to find out under what conditions YouTube content creators would be more likely to be willingly to participate in an online content rating system The findings of this research indicate that the ten participants have a positive association with informing audiences and they connected this to transparency and professionalism. However, they also were very critical about the influences and the effectiveness of this system. Not all content creators thought this system would be effective since the system might not stop children from watching harmful content. However, they agreed that parents are mostly responsible for this and not them and that this tool could be effective as a navigator for supervisors and parents. The participants were still very critical when discussing the effectivity of age recommendation systems as a navigator for children, since this might encourage children to watch harmful content. The most important critical note was about their revenues from these videos. Most content creators questioned if this system would influence their revenues and some even argued that if they would find out that it does, they wouldn't participate or try to manipulate the system.

5.2. Limitations and suggestions

For practical reasons solely YouTube has been researched, however, it would be ignorant to if YouTube would be analyzed as an isolated platform free from the influences of other media and other online social media and video-sharing platforms. YouTube has never functioned as a closed system (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 66). If not all platforms are protected in the same way, space could be opened up for other video-sharing platforms to exploit this. These smaller and therefore less visible platforms could decide to allow this kind of user behavior and this could make them more popular and could make the regulations on the other platform less effective (Jarrett, 2008, pp. 137, 138). Multiple participants have confirmed this. This indicates that these content creators also share their content on other platforms like Instagram. It would be desirable that before this system would be implemented, further research would be done after other popular video-sharing platforms like Facebook, Instagram or the Dutch platform Dumpert. Since users can easily switch platforms, it is of importance that all (large) online video-sharing platforms participate in the same form and it would be practical to research other platforms as well since all platforms have different forms usage and a different upload process.

Since both YouTube and their content creators are dependent on advertisements and brand corporations, it would be interesting to further research the viewpoint of this advertising industry. How

do the decisionmakers decide which content they find suitable for their advertisements or for corporations, and which content don't they find suitable. But also to research how they look at age recommendations and if they would find it helpful to find a suitable partner for their advertisements. It would also be desirable to do this research on a larger scale.

This research had only ten participants and this research has shown that all YouTube content creators have very different content, way of working and a very different connection with their audiences. For example, the ten participants all didn't work very closely with an MCN (Multi Channel Network), but there are also content creators who do work more closely with MCN's. MCN's even influence their way of working to make their content more attractive for brands (Vonderau, 2016, p. 362). The spoken to content creators all haven't mentioned any influence of MCN's on their content. It would definitely be an addition to the research if, when doing further research, content creators connected to MCN's would be included in the sample.

There are also other factors to take into account. For example the subjects they create content about. There are an endless amount of subjects and hobby's which people have created a YouTube channel around, and it could be expected that they all have a slightly different way of working. Therefore, it would be interesting to focus more on these differences between content and their way of working. Besides a focus on their content, it would also be interesting to focus more on their relationship with their audiences. This because all content creators have shown a very different opinion about their own audiences and about their target audience. Especially the idea that most content creators didn't even create content with an audience in mind and they just wait who watches and what overcomes them, would be interesting to elaborate on.

All ten interviews were conducted and transcribed by the same person, this increased the validity since all interviews are quite similar and therefore could be compared well. But it also brings along some tension with the possibility of being biased. This because all subjects have been introduced by the same person. There was explained how children are protected from harmful content in traditional media, how new legislation aims to force online media to do the same and how YouRateIt is the solution provided by NICAM. If someone else explained this legislation, it would be possible that the outcome of the interview is different. Another example is the explanation of YouRateIt. When asking about this system, it has to be explained first. It could be possible that this narrowed their vision a little bit, even though the interviewer tried to keep their creative minds open by telling them that everything is possible at this stage. Most interviewed content creators have admitted that they haven't really thought about this subject until the interview. This made it difficult to ask for their opinion or their own ideas since they haven't really thought about that yet. Certain explanations of certain concepts could have influenced the interviewee. To minimalize the influence of the interviewer, the interviewer tried to give explain these concepts without bias. But, since the researcher introduced them to the subject, it sometimes felt like the interviewees felt obliged to find the project from YouRateIt a good idea since they didn't want to offend the interviewer, despite all the attempts to tell them that this

isn't the case. This was visible when participants started their sentences with sorry when introducing their negative opinion.

5.3. Encouraging participation in age recommendation systems

All content creators showed a willingness to participate in age recommendation systems, which is very positive but also shouldn't be seen as an absolute go from the content creators because they were despite their positive attitude still very critical and sometimes even skeptical. Informing audiences fits into their aim to be a professional and transparent content creator. The most important condition these participants seem to have, is that an age recommendation system shouldn't influence their financial situation. When implementing an age recommendation system like YouRateIt, the financial influences should be minimalized in order to be sure that it will be effective and successful.

All content creators agreed that the perfect time to answer a couple of questions would be at the moment when they wait for their video to be uploaded. However, it might be best if this questionnaire would be hosted on another website. Jeffrey said he wouldn't trust YouTube with this data, since they would probably use it for advertisement purposes. Therefore, it might be better, in order to build trust between the creator of the age recommendation system and the content creators, to not fully integrate the system into YouTube's system. However, possibilities need to be explored to see if this is truly possible.

If content creators, when dealing with this system, would find out about any decline of their income, they could become reluctant and might try to surpass or manipulate the system. Therefore it would be sufficient if the research was done after these effects. It would be very helpful to put an effort into informing these content creators about the process and the possible (financial) influences of this process. This because these content creators don't really have a clear insight into the processes and the decision making behind their revenues. They are used to dealing with non-neutral companies and mutual transparency might build trust.

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Appendix A- Interview schedule

Introduction

This interview will take approximately forty five minutes and will be about how you create your content on YouTube and your visions and ideas about this content and other content on YouTube. There is no good or wrong in this. For the researcher, it is important that you are as honest as possible. In exchange, the researcher will offer confidentiality. Your name will be anonymized. However, since we will be talking about your content, which is offered freely on YouTube, hundred percent anonymity cannot be offered, since you will probably be traceable back to this content. Besides this, it is important to know that this research subject has been requested by NICAM. NICAM is working on a system with which content creators can fill in questions, which will result in an age recommendation. It is also important to know that the European Union has approved on new legislation on this topic. This new legislation says that from 2021, video-sharing platforms like YouTube have to inform their audiences better for possible harmful content for minors. Therefore YouTube will have implement new tools to inform their audiences. YouRateIt could be this new tool, but doesn't have to. YouTube and/or the Dutch government will eventually decide on this.

Interview schedule

General information

- Age
- Genre
- Occupation
- Education
- Number of subscriptions
- When and why have you started your channel?
- Do you generate revenues with YouTube?

Content and awareness

- Could you tell me about the content you create?
    - Which subjects?
    - Genre?
    - What happens in your videos?
    - Do you use existing content?
- Could you describe the process of creating a video?
    - How do you decide on its content?
    - How/when do you edit? And how long does this take?
    - The upload proces
- For who do you create those videos?
    - Could you describe your audiences?
    - Do you have a target audience?
        - How have you decided on this?

- o Do you have younger audiences?
    - ▪ *How do you know?*
    - ▪ *Is all your content suited for them?*
    - ▪ *Do you adjust your content for them?*
    - ▪ *Do you inform them?*
- For who do you think your content is suited and who not?
    - o Could you describe the suitable and not suitable content?
    - o Would you like to inform audiences about that? If yes, how?
- What do you see with other YouTubers? How do they relate to their younger audiences?
    - o Do you see harmful content on other YouTube channels?
        - ▪ Do they inform their audiences?
        - ▪ What is your opinion about them?
    - o Should there even be rules?
    - o What do you think about YouTubers who inform their audiences?
    - o How could YouTubers inform their audiences?
        - ▪ Ages?
        - ▪ Pictorams?
        - ▪ Tekst?
        - ▪ Kids Accounts?

Classification system

- How would you feel about answering 6-15 questions before uploading content?
    - o How much time would you spend on this?
    - o Where in the process would you prefer?
    - o Why would this system be practical or why not?
    - o How much time would you spend on this system?
    - o What kind of questions would you prefer? Sliders, yes/no, categories.
- Before hearing about YouRateIt, did you have a system in mind which could be suitable as well?
    - o Who would inform the audiences?
    - o How would audiences be informed?
    - o When in the process?
    - o Which information is given?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a system like YouRateIt on YouTube?
    - o And why?
- If you could design your own system. What would it look like?
    - o Is there an ideal way to inform younger audiences or their parents?
    - o Is there an ideal way from the viewpoint of the YouTuber?

Appendix B – Coding scheme

	Code	Explanation	Exemplary Quote
1.	Background information	General information about the interviewee, like education, age and professional background	"We are entrepreneurs and we do all kinds of things. We do lot. Companies and different projects." (Peggy)
2.	Their own audiences	References to their own audiences and their behavior	"But when I look at the reactions, than most of them, the youngest are, I think they are teenagers around 15 years old, but I believe I can't go lower that ehh that, with the content I am making." (Aaron)
3.	Willingness / effort	About the amount of effort interviewees want to put in informing their audiences	"Not too long. Two minutes. Two minutes max." (Fred)
4.	Finances	References to the money they make from these videos or the financial aspects of their practices.	"It is not always your subscribers. Because, if every video you make has millions of views, you also have enough money. So." (Dennis)
5.	Motivation	Motivation of uploading videos	"It is more, pure for fun and, another way of looking at it for us, is for her development." (Peggy)
6.	Way of working	References to their routines and their way of creating content	"Then I'm done with it or something. Then, when it's online I move forward and go somewhere else with my head. If I edit something and I don't upload it, yes, that's not chill. Because than you mess certain things up. Than you have other things to do and to record." (Patrick)
7.	YouTube's policy	References to YouTube's current policy and thoughts about their future policies	"Yes, they are the neutral party in this respect, right? They are the intermediary between the advertiser and the YouTuber." (Jeffrey)
8.	Media industry	References to the media industry as a whole and the regulation of it.	"Times have definitely changed in the past two to three years. So, it definitely has become some sort of television." (Edward)
9.	Impact	References to being famous, being role model and/or having an impact on other people's behavior.	"Well, if you have that much reach, you eventually want to inspire people. You are an example to others, so I think, you have to make boundaries about what you can and what you can't do." (Andrew)

10.	Numbers	The mentioning of the importance of the amount of views, likes, and/or subscribers.	"If it's that kind of system, and you could put it in the back-end, so that you can all save it on yes." (Peggy)
11.	Adjusting content	References to adjusting content for others	"I did, oh yes, I did something with fasting, but we also put a warning in the beginning, that people who have eating disorders and those kinds of things, that those people who suffer from that, it could be a trigger to them." (Aaron)
12.	Harmful content	Definitions or thoughts about what is harmful content	"Or eh, throwing stuff in the corner and eh, scolding fucking loud, whatever they scold, it doesn't matter, because I think that is fucking beautiful to see. And then I think, yes, yes, that how it goes with that person. Why would that person behave properly before the camera? Then I think, yes, it is sometimes nice to, yes, to be yourself." (Patrick)
13.	Sanctions	References to sanctions if YouTubers are not complying to the rules	"You can easily fake that of course. But if it's law, then it becomes kind of enforces, then it is illegal to fill this in wrongly, then it would work." (Jeffrey)
14.	Subjectivity	References to how subjective rating systems can be	"The opinions just differ in that. You have those people who are just, raised very open and don't look up from anything. And there are those people who just, are bothered by the smallest things. So yes, I believe it can be very subjective." (Edward)
15.	Other rating systems	References to comparable systems. For example to inform about advertising, or the gaming industry.	"For example, in my description, I write, this video is promoted, or this video is not promoted. I put that in the description of every video." (Jeffrey)
16.	Practical	Practical solutions or ideas about how to make the system practical, effective and user friendly	"For example, what you can do, is, the questions, if, if there is a third party, on a website, and if you can fill it in there and the result will be there. And those results, you can put in your YouTube video." (Peggy)
17.	Effectiveness	Thoughts about the effectiveness of a rating system	"Some content really has to be blocked for children below thirteen years old. But if they have an eighteen plus account they can still see everything." (Edward)

18.	Their own content	Description of their own content	"That is the thing. And besides that. I also do things with food. A lot. I love it. So that is also on my channel." (Aaron)
19.	Inform	Informing audiences about possible harmful content without the use of a system	"That would be good one, that you just do it as a YouTuber. Just warn the audience a little bit more." (Dennis)
20.	Access	About the access of certain content to children.	"Some content definitely needs to be blocked for children of thirteen and under, but well, if they have an eighteen plus account they can still see everything." (Edward)
21.	Advertising industry	References to the industry behind the advertisements in the YouTube videos	"Advertisers, who. It has to be more extreme to demonetize it, but a lot of advertisers just think, I don't want my brand to be associated with someone who punches people." (Jeffrey)
22.	Other YouTubers	Comments about other YouTubers and their behavior or how they might behave	"No, yes, well, I just believe that such a system works differently per YouTuber. Because I think Stuk TV doesn't add anything before their videos." (Edward)
23.	Responsibility	Comments about where the responsibility lies	"I believe as well that definitely, a part of the responsibility lies with the parents themselves." (Peggy)
24.	Doing your part	Comments about giving away the accountability	"But then it is up to the audience indeed what they, what they click away and what not, but then you, as a YouTuber, have sort of built yourself in." (Edward)
25.	Audience behavior	Opinions and comments about the behavior of audiences in general	I think, seriously, that it encourages children to watch it. Children, because it says sixteen plus, they think like oeh… Yes, I want to see that" (Aaron)
26.	Career	References to their professional career and/or their YouTube career	"Yes, and then I thought, oh yes I can do this. I have, as a photographer, I have everything. I have a studio, I have a camera." (Peggy)
27.	Other	Sentences that didn't fit in the above mentioned codes	"But it seems to be that 25 percent of the people who watch that one video just click on to the next one." (Fred)

Appendix C – Five main categories

1. Demonetization of user-generated content

1. Finances
2. Numbers
3. Advertising industry

2. Audiences of user-generated-content / audiences

1. Impact
2. Their own audiences
3. Audiences in general
4. Adjusting content
5. Informing
6. Access of content
7. Responsibility
8. Doing your part
9. Education

3. Professionalization of the YouTube industry

1. Career
2. Motivation
3. Media industry
4. YouTube
5. Other rating systems

4. YouRateIt

1. Willingness/effort
2. Effectiveness
3. Sanctions
4. Practical

5. Neutral

1. Background information
2. Other YouTubers
3. Way of working
4. Harmful
5. Subjectivity
6. Their own content
7. Other