

Positioning the Online Musician

The Development of Self-Identities of Dutch Musicians on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Social media fundamentally alters identity construction by multiplying levels of mediation and facilitating interaction, understanding the means and affordances of social media for co-constructing and upholding an identity becomes essential for understanding how current day musicians construct, revise and alter their identities through identity work. However, there is a paucity of research concerning the identities specifically created for online spheres from the musicians' perspective. Therefore, this research contributes to filling this gap by focusing on the narration of their online identity over social media. This research starts from the research question: how do Dutch musicians develop their self-identity through narrative identity work over social media? Eleven qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with various Dutch musicians and two additional interviews with experts within the field. After performing a thematic content analysis, the results prove that self-identity depends on and is constructed by a variety of intertwined factors related to current trends and changes over time. Identities are influenced by and dependent on events, lifelong experiences, audiences, platforms, and more, within the personal as well professional spheres. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy, as each musician needs to find their personal unique selling point. Online self-narratives are created in order to position their ever-changing identities within a logical, comprehensive story. However, the pressure to maintain these self-narratives in an active and successful manner is high. Ultimately, visibility and relevancy are key in order to survive as a musician, both online and offline, and they beat the difficulties and pressure of social media. The online self-representation of Dutch musicians and their narrative identity work are thus in constant motion, brand-dependent and never fixed.

KEYWORDS: *Identity, Identity work, Narrative identity work, Musician, Social media*

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Preface

As this Master Thesis marks the end of my time as a student, years that I definitely exploited to the fullest, I would really like to thank all the people who helped making this possible.

First of all, Dad: thanks for inspiring me to dive deeper into “your” world. Being your daughter and working for you has sparked an interest in a subject I did not foresee to be so interesting I did not mind working on it for over half a year. Your passion for music and research proves to be contagious!

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1. Introduction

These days, there are a multitude of online platforms for musicians to gain visibility. The rise of social and other digital media created countless options to promote oneself and one's music. For example, there are a number of digital streaming platforms to distribute one's music, which include YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, Apple Music, Pandora, Soundcloud, Tidal, Deezer, and so on (Wilson, 2020). Similarly, social media creates opportunities to inform one's audience about the music itself but also additional aspects, such as the story, thoughts or inspiration behind the music that has just been released (Owsinski, 2017). Being present has become important for musicians, because fans can peek into the everyday life of a musician, interact with them and other fans, seize information on the next event or a new track about to be released, and so on (Baym, 2012; Owsinski, 2017).

Therefore, an online profile on any of the platforms is a powerful instrument to endorse personal and professional lives for musicians. It seems easy and open for anyone to use, because anyone can upload anything up on the internet and everyone can access it (Van Dijck, 2013). But these opportunities do not come without challenges. For example, this public visibility may have an effect on musicians' motives behind uploading and posting materials by increasing the pressure to join the hype and construct an online identity like their peers (Leary, 1996; Bauman 2000). Similarly, Lindh de Montoya (2000) notes how stakeholders assume an active role within this process. This means, social media is not just a neutral stage of self-performance, but is instead a tool for shaping an identity (Van Dijck, 2013). This relates to how Buckingham (2008) described identity, namely as "something we *do*, rather than simply something we *are*" (p. 8). Already in 1986, Cathcart and Grumpert (1986) argued that the individual's self-image is largely dependent on media, as it is responsible for altering and influencing interactions (Innis, 1951; McLuhan, 1964). As social media fundamentally alters identity construction by multiplying levels of mediation and facilitating interaction (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Lindgren, 2017; Van Dijck, 2013), understanding the means and affordances of social media for co-constructing and upholding an identity becomes

essential for understanding how current day musicians construct, revise and alter their identities through identity work (Brown, 2015; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

The social relevance of this study is high. Music professionals all around the world see the value of social media in the connection with audiences, and call it a key part of the musicians' survival (Baym, 2012). With the great numbers of musicians taking part in order to maintain their careers, it is worth looking at some of their ideas on how to accomplish such a thing. A better understanding of how musicians develop their identity through social media can help them use their resources more effectively and manage their expectations well. The topic is also relevant for me, as I am the daughter of a Dutch musician and take great personal interest in looking into the professional identities that other Dutch musicians wish to convey across these platforms.

Certainly, the theoretical relevance is high, because entrepreneurship in the media and creative industries is a growing discipline. So far, significant research has been done on the online activity of musicians generally. This research has focused on subjects such as audience engagement (Marwick & boyd, 2011), fandom (Condry, 2004), artist-audience relations (Baym, 2011), amateur musicians online (Hoare et al., 2014). Additionally, when it comes to the Netherlands specifically, research has addressed the relationship between music and Dutch youth (Gazzah, 2008), and investigated Dutch rock and roll bands (Cohen, 2013), singing in Dutch dialects (Grijp, 2017), Dutch music education (Evelein, 2006), and the relation between improvisation and the musicians' identity (Smilde, 2016). However, at the same time and despite of the rising importance of the mediated construction of identity of musicians, there is a paucity of research concerning the identities specifically created for online spheres from the musicians' perspective, the so-called self-assigned identities (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Furthermore, it is important to conduct in-depth research on the development of musicians' identities, because we need to know more about the details of what discourses, narratives and resources are available for musicians' self-identities in particular contexts and how this helps them emerge. More insights are of great importance for the music community as well as for our general knowledge of mediated identity formation in general (Baldauf, Develotte, & Ollagnier-Beldame, 2017; Dooly, 2017; Fornäs & Xinaris, 2013; Van Dijck, 2013), let alone mediatized "identity work"

(Brown, 2015; Horst, Järventie-Thesleff, & Perez-Latre, 2019; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008), and the area of identity work of entrepreneurs, which needs to be better understood (Leitch & Harrison, 2016; Watson, 2008, 2009; Werthes, Mauer & Brettel, 2018).

Generally, identity has become one of the prime discourses in organization studies (Brown, 2015). This includes knowledge about identity, social and organizational identity, emotions and identity, as well as identity work (Brown, 2015; 2018; Daily & Browning, 2014; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Down & Warren, 2006; LaPointe, 2010). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) have noted that the greater the chance the public will see published content, the more motivated this makes a person to control the outcome and impressions that follow. Identity work can be defined, following Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), who describe this as a process and practice of people constructing and maintaining their identities. This notion becomes highly relevant, considering that the content published on personal social media thus becomes crafted with care for public consumption (Deckers & Lacy, 2018; Förnas & Xinaris, 2013; Van Dijck, 2013). Consequently, the prospect of choosing to use certain narratives for one's identity work in order to strengthen an online message will therefore increase, as narratives are used to make sense of one's life (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Overall, the proliferation of social platforms, their ever-increasing variety of affordances for mediated identity work, the increasing number of people and, in this case, also artistic entrepreneurs (musicians) using these opportunities of social media for conducting narrative identity work, points towards a significant gap in the interdisciplinary literature concerning the mediated identity work of musician entrepreneurs. For that reason, this thesis aims to contribute to filling this gap by focusing on the narration of their online identity over social media. This research will start from the research question:

RQ: How do Dutch musicians develop their self-identity through narrative identity work over social media?

In order to answer the research question, eleven semi-structured in-depth interviews with Dutch musicians were conducted. These were analysed by established techniques for interpreting and coding qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), namely a thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2014). The results retrieved from the data were discussed with two experts on social media, artist branding and storytelling in order to gather new and relevant insights.

The thesis is structured as follows. The literature review describes in detail the different theoretical concepts that are used for building the theoretical framework. This chapter aspires to provide the necessary amplification on concepts such as '(self-) identity', 'musician' and 'narrative identity work', which serve as the foundation for this research. Subsequently, the methodology section will further elaborate on the qualitative method chosen and executed: the interviews previously mentioned. The most important results retrieved from these interviews are discussed in the chapter following, where they will be compared with the theory presented in the theoretical framework. This way, an answer to the research can be formulated, which will be presented in the conclusion. This research will be concluded by stating its limitations and suggesting opportunities for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical foundation for the research is further illustrated. It becomes clear that both the concept of identity and musician are complex and without a solid definition. Its propagation via social media complicates the matter even further, which makes it all the more interesting to research.

2.1. A constructivist view on self-identity

Identity is a prominent concept that has more than just one definition in the literature due to its complexity. When thinking about identity, it raises the question: 'Who am I?' (Coupland & Brown, 2012). According to Cerulo (1997) and Gergen and Gergen (1988), people seek to address this question by developing and sustaining through processes of social interaction, as identity ultimately refers to the various meanings that individuals attach to themselves and that others attach to individuals (Brown, 2015: p. 23; Baumeister, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Gecas, 1982). Identity can therefore be understood as both an interior and public phenomenon.

When it comes to the interior definition, contemporary theories describe identity as an "essential, cognitive, socialised, phenomenological or psychic phenomenon that governs human action" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2011, p. 3). Identity is seen as that what is in the core of a person. It is the main motivation behind the actions coming from that person. In the end, many drivers, ways of acting and feelings can be traced back to identity, even though people usually present themselves differently and accordingly to the various contexts they encounter (Benwell & Stokoe, 2011).

Additionally, focusing on the public construction, Baldauf et al. (2017) argue that identity can be understood through a process of three steps. First, it is locally constructed, negotiated and maintained; secondly, it is connected to demographic and social categories, to local roles and positions, and to locally defined categorizations; and thirdly, "it can only be understood in relations to other identities" (p. 4). Identity is thus seen as something that is constructed and needs to be interpreted in relation to social and available actors. Accordingly, as social context is adaptable to time and change, identity can vary or change over time as well depending on these available contexts. In

this manner, Stets and Burke (2000) state that in accordance with identity theories “the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications” (p. 224). In this understanding, identity is not only seen as constructed through social context, it is interpreted by other people as the construction occurs in discourse and other social behaviour such as how we talk, what we wear, think, feel and more. This means, identity is not just reflected in discourse, it is constituted in discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2011). With this focus, this research takes a social-constructivist perspective to identity. Focusing on the social construction of identities highlights that actors in and around organizations claim, accept, negotiate, affirm, stabilize, maintain, reproduce, challenge, disrupt, destabilize, repair, or otherwise relate to their sense of selves and others (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012, p. 3), this shifts the attention to the processes of construction, by which identity is an “ongoing accomplishment”. These processes are “open to contestation and as productive or fragmented, fluid selves characterized by multiple, contradictory narratives as of convergent, stable ones” (Schultz et al., 2012). Therefore, this conception of identity is helpful for understanding how musicians interact with and reflect on their interaction with their followers and audiences over social media, because it puts the communicative and relational aspect of construction in focus of the analysis. This is further refined by the notion of identity work.

2.2. Identity work

As mentioned before, most researchers acknowledge that identities are not simply chosen, neither are they assigned. Instead, they are the effects of identity work processes and shaped along the way (Mumby 1997; Trethewey 1999). In essence, identity work itself is defined as “people’s engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities” (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 137). It is a process through which people seek to establish a consistent and coherent sense of self (Beech, Gilmore, Hibbert, & Ybema, 2016; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). If a person is experiencing changes, identity work is needed to preserve some feeling of validity (Ibarra, 2003).

According to Coupland and Brown (2012) identities are thus 'worked on' by people, even if just partly, by composing different versions of themselves through their narrations. As Earthy and Cronin (2008) explain, narrative can either be a tale or story, or a "form of talk or writing that aims to tell a story and may be constructed according to classical ideas of plot" (p. 464). The terms 'narrative' and 'story' are often used interchangeably, as the term 'story' is described as "a description of an event or series of events in a manner that conveys meaning as well as factual information" (p. 464). Both terms thus draw attention to three integral matters to the concept of identity work: social production; work performed through using stories or narratives; and the presence of narrative in personal accounts of life (Earthy & Cronin, 2008).

Along these lines, LaPointe (2010) states that the constructivist understanding of narrative identity views identity narratives as "something individuals construct and have" (p. 3), which means that narratives and identities pre-exist in the back of the individual's mind prior to expressing them (Alasuutari, 1997). Additionally, LaPointe (2010) specifies that the meaning given to stories is always co-constructed within the discursive resources available. Hence, these narratives and identities are or have already been influenced by events, lifelong experiences and community narratives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This means, identity narratives are constructed by both experiences and the conditions in which the narrative itself is told. This highlights that "identity is a performance and co-construction always achieved within the immediate context of interaction" (LaPointe, 2010, p. 7). This however does not mean that 'inner' identity is being replaced by an 'outer' one, as there will still be parts of performances given off unconsciously, additional to the conscious ones (Van Dijck, 2013). However, intentional presentation is a very common strategy to sculpt your persona, your identity (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, in this research, identity is viewed from a constructivist understanding.

Identity is constituted through language and discourses (e.g. Beech, 2008; Coupland, 2001; Eraranta & Moisander, 2011). The meanings we attach to ourselves, what we say or write about ourselves, defines how we construct our identity for the outside world. Generally, people do this through the use of available discourses and forming narratives (Brown, 2015). Narrative is seen as the "meaning for straightforward copy of the events recounted" (Brown, Gabriel, & Gherardi, 2009). Action, life and

historical existence have been constructed by using narratives as well, as it is our very own way of being and dealing with time and events (Carr, 1986).

Subsequently, identity can change over time as new social connections are made and personal or professional circumstances change. This leads to new experiences that, in turn, lead to a re-interpretation of old experiences and hence to new ways a story from those experiences is told. These changes in narrative identity may come from transitions, big or small, and often require new skills, attitudes, interactions, behaviours, patterns, leading up towards possible fundamental changes (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Just like people do, identity absorbs contemporary trends – how the individual interprets and makes sense of current societal or social circumstances. For example, seeking and experiencing the fluidity, flexibility and unpredictability that follows from a more porous, transient and “postmodern” world (Bauman, 2000; Clegg & Baumeler, 2010), people may re-define, re-tell and feel differently about themselves. This may also lead to overlapping identities, which come from different aspects that people experience.

The concept of “identity bricolage” – describing identity as “cobbled together” – pushes this understanding even further and highlights that people may piece together their identity fragments in a rather flexible manner, as they recreate themselves according to fluctuations in networks and expectations (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011; Beck, 1997; Gergen, 1991). This underscores that the talk around ‘identity’ could be becoming a mesh of ‘identities’ as a result of this flexibility (Coupland & Brown, 2012). Consequently, identity is recognized as rarely continuous (Baumeister, 1986), often unstable (Collinson, 2003) and sometimes liquid (Bauman, 2000). People can and will adapt to the zeitgeist and shift, re-interpret and re-tell their identity (or identities) is a result of interaction, available positions and particularities of a given time and place (LaPointe, 2010).

To summarize, identity represents the evolving and internalized story resulting from a selection of a person’s past, present and future (McAdams, 1999). Along these lines, identity is perceived as an ongoing process that consists of identity work that enables people to change and adapt their identity – consciously and unconsciously – over time, executed through the various communicative resources that are available to the

individual, both off- and online (Dooly, 2017). This highlights the relevance of this conception for understanding how people (in this case musicians) perform their narrative identity work through social media and continuously engage in re-writing, re-telling and re-forming their precarious sense of selves. The more conscious these artistic-creative entrepreneurs can become about the way in which they talk about themselves and about the influence that others have on their construction of self on different platforms, the more they strategically manoeuvre the waters of social media and make use of the opportunities for self-development and self-presentation in a constructive manner. Yet, how musicians do that, we currently know very little about.

2.3. Identifying as musician through identity work

Today, simply stating that being a ‘musician’ means ‘the ability to play a musical instrument’, does not seem to cut it anymore (O’Neill, 2002). Over time, there have been many attempts to find an all-encompassing and unambiguous term. However, as being or feeling as a musician is part of an assigned identity, the discussion above highlights that this is might be more complex than just a label, but certainly relates to the complex web of experiences, self-perceptions and relations that musicians find themselves in and what they can draw on to describe their sense of self. In this line, Zhang, Susino, McPherson and Schubert (2020) recently published findings that come close to a general consensus on the term. They compared musicians with non-musicians and developed a three-component model of the concept based on a review of existing literature stating definitions of the word ‘musician’ (Zhang et al., 2018). The first component focuses on the “musician as defined by musical skill”, referring to the ability to play a musical instrument (Hallam, 2010); the second on the “musician as defined by self-identity”, which means that the identity of a musician is embedded in the individual’s sense of identity and can thus be influenced by many environmental factors (Hallam, Cross, & Thaut, 2016); and the third on “musician as defined by predisposition”, which comes down to talent and aptitude (Zhang et al. 2020). The results of their research indicate that a musician is someone ‘with at least six years of musical expertise, and who practices at least an hour a week’ (Zhang et al. 2020). The most common form of musical expertise is obtained through music training – not simply

music lessons, which on its turn made up for only a small part of the papers used for the literature review. Additionally, the level of expertise required is said to differ amongst musicians, however it is not explained any further by the authors (Zhang et al. 2020).

Nevertheless, this conclusion solely includes the musical skill component, as the researchers themselves admit, leaving out the fact that being a musician is part of an identity, which on its turn is a social and cultural construct and does not fit a one size fits all predetermined set of characteristics (Zhang et al. 2020). As Hallam et al. (2016) wrote, “we don’t acquire the label ‘musician’ simply by attaining advanced technical skills” (p. 464), meaning technical skills are not the sole indication of viewing oneself as a musician. Again, it is the combination of our personal, social and cultural surroundings that influence the way we see ourselves, musician or not (Hallam et al. 2016). It is about gaining a sense of self-identity in relation to music (O’Neill, 2002). This is relevant for this research as the identity that musicians attach to themselves might be seen as much more important than the actual years of musical training obtained. Therefore, this research takes the concept ‘musician’ as one that relates to one defined by self-identity.

What can be seen as a part of identifying as a musician, is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has been inherently intertwined with identifying as a musician through time and time (Weber, 2004). As a musician, you ultimately want to rise above the conventional performer as you desire your audience to recognize your talent. In order to do so, “a musician has to identify an unexploited avenue of composition, performance, or production, and find ways by which to accomplish it” (Weber, 2004, p. 5). In other words, being a musician means the necessity to find ways to sell your music and self to an audience and look for new ventures, as there is no music that can be sold to everybody (Obschonka, Silbereisen, Cantner, & Goethner, 2015; Malm, 1993). This comes down to acquiring a broader set of skills besides making music in order to do so successfully. Musical opportunism is key (Obschonka et al., 2015). As Weber further clarifies, self-promotion and a personal network are a big part of this. As a result, a next, logical step is undertaking action on both professional and financial level when opportunities appear, resulting in musical entrepreneurship (Weber, 2004).

2.4. Narrative Identity Work

This research approaches identities as constituted and given meaning to through discourses that occur in both social and cultural practices (e.g. Gergen, 1991). Identity work practices can range from displaying parts of life (Elsbach, 2003) to psychological strategies such as selective social comparison or ideological reframing (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), experimenting with possible selves (Ibarra, 1999), seeking a balance between multiple identities (Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006), and using rhetorical devices such as stories, accounts, disclaimers, et cetera (Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Snow & Anderson, 1987; Van Maanen, 1998). The term 'positioning' (Bamberg, 2004; Davies & Harré, 1990; Wortham, 2001) is therefore often used when it comes to identity work, as it underlines the narrative nature of identity work. Positioning concerns a process through which individuals adopt, resist and offer positions that are made available in discourses and master narratives: they tell a story (Davies & Harré, 1990). Through the use of narratives, a point can be made after a series of events (Bruner, 1990; Labov, 1972; Weick, 1995), making it relevant for the audience (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988).

In the conception of narrative identity work, the individual talks about him or herself in the form of a self-narrative (Linde, 1993). A musician, for example, can position him- or herself as successful by both visualisations and narrations of them investing an increasingly number of hours into rehearsing as they are, for example, getting ready for a tour. With just the rehearsal narrative the audience knows this is indeed concerning the life of a musician. This, as the term 'rehearsal' is part of a larger social discourse connected to the music sector and instigates the thought that this individual is therefore part of this particular professional group (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Burr, 2003). However, there is not much more information this statement contains. By narrating the rehearsals preceded a sold-out tour, the previous events and narrations have been positioned in a different light. Now, the audience knows that the musician is performing at sold-out venues and can thus be seen as popular and maybe even successful. This in turn increases the chance of accepting the point being made about the claimed identity: that of a busy and successful musician. Through the use of social efforts to craft self-narratives, the person's identity aim has been met (Ibarra &

Barbulescu, 2010; Ashforth, 2001; Van Maanen, 1998). This process is called 'narrative identity work'. Narratives, especially when career related, can draw on both professional and other social discourses that are associated with certain identity positions and additional categorizations, such as for example the term 'touring' is with the music industry (Duberley, Cohen, & Mallon, 2006; Cohen, 2006; Peltonen, 1998). These discourses offer positions that form the basis for following actions (LaPointe, 2010) and the person using them will come to experience the world from this point of view and use related narratives, meanings and categories relevant to that discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990). This enables "narrative positioning" of the musicians (Soreide, 2006) that can now rather easily take place over and be facilitated by social media.

2.5. Social media and narrative identity work

Understanding what we currently know about social media becomes important for developing the notion of narrative identity work for musicians. Through social media, we share knowledge and information, we attend to social interactions and relations, and we act towards a communal goal that is reflected in all of this (Treem, Dailey, Pierce, & Biffi, 2016). However, social media cannot be defined by any specific format, topic, scope or audience, as there are many platforms, technologies and activities associated with the term (Treem et al., 2016). They all have in common that they are networked communication platforms with sociality as their focal point, containing three crucial tools for its participants: "1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site" (Treem et al., 2016; Ellison and boyd, 2013, p. 158).

Recent research concerning Dutch usage of social media, revealed the most popular platforms to be WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn. The previous ranking is from highest to lower popularity and according to the number of users in the Netherlands in 2019 (Groenenboom, 2020). Social media software has been developed to combine the usage of diverse semiotic resources and media with the option of different "voices" (Androutsopoulos, 2011). As a result of this, social media are

seen as popular stages for communication, self-promotion and self-expression because of the available tools (Van Dijck, 2013). While self-promotion has been consciously enabled, the self-expression part started out as an unconscious consequence. Choices to use either sound, photos, text, gestures, looks, personal language, professional language, et cetera, enables the construction of an identity like never before (Baldauf et al., 2017). When it comes to identity in online communities, Palloff and Pratt (2007) argue that the representation of social identity requires an intentional development on a social, online presence (p. 43). This way, the member of that online community can portray oneself as “a real person” (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Thus, with an online account, users are now able to ‘tell the whole story of your life on a single page’ (Zuckerberg, 2012). The resulting narrative is a carefully crafted construction filled with an order of life events, ready for the world to see (Van Dijck, 2007).

Social media today essentially enable ‘mass self-communication (Castells, 2009). This means, even though they started out as community spaces, social media have now shifted from facilitating connectedness to becoming a platform for individual storytelling (Van Dijck, 2013). Consequently, as we are currently living in a world of unprecedented technological opportunity, it is all the more important we try to gain understanding of the impact this has on the forming of our identities (Dooly, 2017). Self-presentation itself is not a new phenomenon, but the rules of the game have simply changed and increased with the move to an online space (Van Dijck, 2013). They have multiplied, become seamless, and even contradictory in parts, thereby promoting a fragmentation and proliferation of self-identities online. However, the affordances of social media make it possible, if the adequate skills are acquired, to make distinctions between one’s personal identity and one’s professional identity on which presentation of oneself can differ (Treem et al., 2016). In other words, musicians can communicate differently depending on the platform and their audience. Through targeting audiences specifically, a musician can use different voices and to choose content for either personal or professional branding. Although new tools mean learning how to handle new presentation styles and issues as privacy settings accordingly as well (Van Dijck, 2013). Additionally, there is the option to use data analytics in order to measure and evaluate online visibility and effectiveness (Van Dijck, 2013). An instrument that makes it easy to

adapt new strategies in order to reach one's online goals. Overall, social media makes for the adaptation of a lot of new skills in the end.

Because of social media, people are constantly working towards creating more insights on their identity, both for themselves, and now because of the online network, for others as well (Watson, 2009). Throughout the years, social media users have adapted their strategies in order to find new ways to express their self-identities (Van Dijck, 2013). The new tools that have become available, such as stories, filters, polls, options to add different kind of emotions to posting and commenting and so on, have drastically changed the way in which individuals express their identities on social media. Davies and Harré (1990) pointed out the co-construction of identities through the interaction between narrator and audience. However, positioning and situating identity within discourses and interaction has been made easier through social media. Through participation in a particular practice, like social media, the user learns about relevant narrations, storylines, in terms of the self and will come to experience the self from that perspective through excessive use of it (Davies & Harré, 1990). Additionally, Weber and Mitchell (2008) propose that the enabling of imagery for the construction of online identity, is critical to the way in which today's generation does so. Social media is indeed not only a way of self-presentation, it is a way of self-reflection too. Personal social media production forces people to look at themselves, both through their own eyes and the eyes of an outsider. While this already provides feedback, the built-in response mechanisms and audience response will add to this. Media production invites others to provide feedback, which mediates and reshapes how we will see ourselves and how we think others will see us. Simultaneously, the media production itself is transparent as well as choices, materials and processes used are visible for large audiences. This way, social media use not only creates and enlarges one's identity, it also enables a cycle of constant adaptation and manipulation (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). In the end, there is thus more to social media and online identity construction than one might anticipate.

Hence, it is not just the users who are the authorities controlling their online actions. Many online influences are actually ones preserved or controlled by the platforms itself. Another example of this is platform owners for one are pushing the

necessity of a uniform online identity. Maximum transparency is not only needed in order to gain knowledge on their users, advertisers are requesting ‘truthful data’ too (Van Dijck, 2013). This creates a need for authentic self-promotion, something not all social media users might be aware of. Users often feel the need to address multiple sides about them online, each story handling a different side and meant for a different audience while still promoting this as one online identity (Van Dijck, 2013). This however potentially messes up the coherence and clarity of their online data and thus upset the so-called algorithms. Algorithms are coded measurements of sociality, a technology that is implemented to generate as many connections as possible and steer performances (Beer, 2008, 2009; Van Dijck, 2013). However, users are still often unaware of the effects they might have upon them, making it even harder to attempt to control (Beer, 2008, 2009).

This shows, we currently know plenty about musicians and their entrepreneurial development, but we lack an in-depth understanding of their narrative identity work. In particular, how they construct their identity within this digital age, viewing this from the musicians’ perspective. Therefore, this research aims to create an understanding of this subject by going straight to the source. This is done through qualitative in-depth interviews and a thematic content analysis, which is discussed more elaborate in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

This section covers the methodology and steps taken to better understand the online identity formation and narrative identity work by Dutch musicians on social media.

3.1. Choice of method

In order to gain an understanding of how Dutch musicians develop their online self-identity, the data for this research was gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews. This method allows to understand the development of the self-identities and possible motivations for creating certain narratives, as it is the main method used when searching for reasons (Hermanowicz, 2002). Generally, individual accounts are representations of a real life (Earthy and Cronin, 2008). Therefore, in-depth interviewing creates a closer look at people and their social worlds. It is the best way to capture all levels of significance and to uncover how people make sense of themselves (Hermanowicz, 2002).

This is precisely what this research entails as this research focuses on individual identities, as an individual's inherent complexities, contexts and other factors involved in the process needs to be accounted for (Dooly, 2017). Every musician has encountered different situations that have led to their present-day identity. By analysing the process of identity-forming individually, this research makes sense of the conscious and unconscious paths taken in order to co-construct them (LaPointe, 2010). While this research focusses on the online identities of musicians, it is important to learn about their offline lives as well, which is only possible through in-depth interviews. During the interview, the interviewer can fulfil an active role in accomplishing this (Mishler, 1986). As most storytelling involves someone who listens, conversation and thus an interview is the optimal method to conduct this research when it comes to getting to know the entire story behind one's identity (Boje, 1991; Linde, 1993). Additionally, interviews can be examined as it were natural or real-life conversations, making this a good method to discuss and reflect with the musicians about their sense of selves (LaPointe, 2010).

3.2. Data gathering

The data collection process started at the end of February 2020 and ended at the end of March. This means most of the interviews were happening when “Covid-19”, also known as Corona virus pandemic, erupted within the Netherlands. The following intelligent lockdown made it impossible to conduct the interviews face-to-face. Consequently, out of the eleven interviewees, only one interview was done in person. The remaining ten had to be organized through the use of online communication tools. To do so, communication tools with the possibility to use both audio and video were chosen, such as Skype and FaceTime. According to Sullivan (2012), these tools come close to doing a face-to-face interview as the social cues can be gathered by both the interviewee and interviewer.

In total, thirteen interviews were conducted, of which eleven were with Dutch musicians that provided the data for the research. The two additional interviews were with experts on the topics of social media, artists and storytelling, with whom some of the results retrieved from the data were discussed to create new and relevant insights on the matters. The interviews with the musicians were designed in a semi-structured manner (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Through the use of a topic list based on the theoretical framework, a list of possible questions and additional follow-up probes were compiled. However, as the interviewees are not all practicing the same instrument, are currently in different stages of their lives and career, and have gotten there through various ways, I added questions and responded fluently to the development of the conversation and the interviewee (Roulston & Choi, 2018). For example, if the interviewee brought up an unaccounted but significant aspect concerning the research during the interview, the interview itself was change accordingly. Similarly, this strategy was continued for the list of questions for the interviewees that were interviewed after.

To support the analysis and capture experiences from the interview, I took notes during the interview. This allowed capturing thoughts, body language and facial expressions “in the moment”. As interviews are of highly interpretive nature and thus depend heavily on the perceptions of the interviewer, it is best to secure the initial thoughts and impressions in the moment (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Furthermore, as this served as one of the criteria for sampling as well, the interviews with musicians

were recorded by telephone and later transcribed. A consent form was sent to the interviewees prior to the interview asking for permission to record, as privacy is of utmost importance. Before the start of each interview, the interviewees were asked to either sign this consent form or to give verbal consent to the use of their data. All but one decided on verbal consent.

To ensure a focused and feasible data collection that is meaningful for conducting this research, I conducted purposive and convenience sampling (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). These sampling strategies are considered to be “Nonprobability Sampling Techniques” that allow choosing a specific and targeted sample from a population” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 1).

3.2.1. Convenience sampling

First of all, as this research is based on a subject that is close to heart, it mostly relied on personal connections within the Dutch music scene for finding the interviewees and is therefore making use of convenience sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). This strategy for sampling is a type of non-random and nonprobability sampling where subjects are chosen based on meeting certain criteria, much like criterion sampling. However, convenience sampling relies solely on choosing subjects based on the proximity to the researcher, creating easy access. For the consideration of choosing interviewees based on these personal connections, easy accessibility and the willingness to participate have played an important role (Etikan et al., 2016). Additionally, the already established personal connection played a big role in creating the willingness and openness of chosen interviewees as well. This ensured that the interview felt more like a conversation, which according to Hermanowicz (2002) is the number one characteristic of a great interview.

However, critics of convenience sampling note the risk of the presence of ‘outliers’ because of the high self-selection possibility (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). Outliers can disturb the balance in data and decrease the precision, thus affecting the outcome of an analysis badly (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012). In order to control this, another sampling method was used in order to make sure not only the right

data was gathered, but also diverse data in avoidance of outliers. Furthermore, a paragraph on validity and reliability is attached to this chapter.

3.2.2. Purposive sampling

Additionally, this research used purposeful sampling for the selection and identification of the interviewees. Purposeful sampling is a method to yield the cases that are rich of information (Etikan et al., 2016). Essentially, this comes down to finding the right people to interview to make sure the research can be executed best. This includes finding individuals who are knowledgeable or experienced within the topic of research; willing and available to participate; able “to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner” (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015, p. 534). The sampling must thus be in line with the aims and expectations of the research in order to maximize the validity and efficiency (Palinkas et al., 2015). While there are numerous purposeful sampling designs possible, this research used two strategies.

3.2.2.1. Criterion sampling

Firstly, criterion sampling was carried out, meaning that the people chosen for the interviews had to meet some predetermined criterion of importance in order to fit the research (Palinkas et al., 2015). Qualitative methods require elements of both depth and breadth. Criterion sampling creates an extensive understanding of the subject. This helps reaching the eventual goal of theoretical saturation, meaning all aspects of the phenomenon discussed are included and examined in detail within the research, by providing the best selection of interviewees possible to do so. Selecting individuals who can simultaneously expand and narrow the field of view, will therefore only help simplify reaching theoretical saturation (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this case, the criterion of inclusion in a certain category depended on four points of criteria:

- The interviewee needs to identify as a musician;
- The interviewee needs to be a “trained musician”;
- The interviewee needs to have a (or multiple) social media account(s) on which he or she visibly posts work-related content;

- The interviewee needs to be willing to be audio recorded and openly speak about his or her self-identity as a musician.

Starting with the first two criteria, all interviewees need to identify as a musician in order to be able to discuss their self-identity as a musician. Additionally, for this research only “trained musicians” were interviewed as opposed to “playing musicians”. This means the interviewees all followed music lessons in order to play their musical instrument (Zhang et al., 2020). The level of training however differs amongst the musicians interviewed, as it is both important and interesting to compare musicians of different levels in different points within their career. Additionally, they all need to use social media in a relatively active manner, in the sense that they use the platform, at least, to promote their work. According to Treem et al. (2016), the way in which people use social media differs. Social media use by individuals is often seen as purely active and visible, while lots of users do not engage in public acts of communication or expression. Most of the social media users are in fact so-called ‘lurkers’, people using social media solely as a mean of information gathering and entertainment (Treem et al., 2016). For this research, the creation of an online self-identity however needs visible work and acts of personal expressions in order to analyse. Therefore, the criterion for visibly posting content was induced. Furthermore, the interviewees need to be willing to be audio recorded and speak openly about self-identity and being a musician. Naturally, all kinds of data will get lost without tape-recording the interview (Hermanowicz, 2002). Willingness to participate in an open and honest manner is needed to create the required depth to execute this research properly.

3.2.2.2. Maximum Variation Sampling

In order to research all available angles to the self-identity of musicians, maximum variation sampling was used. This strategy for sampling is also known as “Heterogeneous Sampling”, as it selects subjects “across a broad spectrum relating to the topic of study” (Etikan et al., 2016). Therefore, interviewees of both genders, various ages, operating different instruments and with different levels of notoriety were included within the sample for this research. While this seems like too broad of a spectrum to analyse, Linde (1993) argues that while career stories take place similarly within wide

context, the interviews can still be looked at as one type of practice and interplay for executing identity work (LaPointe, 2010). Additionally, the coherence and continuity of identity is largely dependent on the means of time (Linde, 1993). So, while identity work takes place and can be analysed in the present, the context of the entire life of the interviewee needs to be taken into account as identities are crafted over time and through experiences (McAdams 1993; Ricoeur 1984). Hence the co-construction mentioned in the choice of method. It is therefore interesting to interview musicians of different ages in order to get an idea of the identity development of musicians over time.

Similarly, the size of their online audiences ranges from a few hundred to a few thousand. However, while this research is not about the artists' reach or the numbers itself, these numbers were expected to be of influence to the online self-identity created by the interviewee. Interviewees with bigger audiences are expected to feel their identity being strengthened as the visibility offers them a bigger platform for more professional and career-related self-narratives. Therefore, interviewees of different levels of notoriety, based on their Instagram following, were included within the sample, as can be seen in table 1.

Name	Artist (1) or band (2) name	Age	Sex	Musical practice / profession	Instagram followers*	Duration interview	Date interview
Carlo de Wijs	New Hammond Sound Project (2)	58	M	Hammond organ	1.043	01:32:17	29/02
Simone Roerade	Mrs. Hips (2)	50	F	Vocals	1.246	48:55	17/03
Florieke de Geus	Flora not Fauna (2), Erasmus Music Collective (2)	20	F	Vocals, piano	1.184	01:16:07	19/03
Boye Ingwersen	KAUW (2)	21	M	Keys, Hammond organ	802	01:25:12	20/03
Victor Steenmeijer	-	20	M	Vocals, guitar	897	55:12	20/03
Willem 't Hart	-	26	M	Keys, Hammond organ	6.675	01:16:38	24/03
Candy Dulfer	-	48	F	Saxophone	61,1K	01:23:55	24/03
José	-	50	F	Vocals	2.429	01:22:57	26/03
Frank Wienk	Binkbeats (1)	36	M	Drums and percussion	17,5K	01:29:44	26/03
Jordy van Toornburg	Jordan Roy (1)	32	M	Vocals	9.445	01:13:01	27/03

Shirma Rouse	-	40	F	Vocals	28K	01:09:37	31/03
Lisa Weeda ¹	-	31	F	Writer, program maker, transmedia maker and director	1.731	00:49:42	09/04
Melanie Esther ²	-	24	F	Artist branding & social media coach	2.172	01:06:25	11/06

* As were on June 22, 2020.

Table 1: Details on both interviewees and interviews

3.3. Operationalization

The topic list is based on the theoretical framework.³ The four main focus areas, which are derived from the theoretical framework, are “social media”, “identity”, “identity work” and “narrative identity work”. These served as the themes the interview questions were based on.

To start with, the concept of “social media” was used to gain a better understanding of the interviewee’s social media usage and strategy. Questions about which platforms they use, target audiences and content were therefore included, next to questions going more in depth such as thoughts on the necessity of social media. Subsequently, “identity” as a topic went more in depth into how the interviewee perceived oneself and how this came into development. “Identity work” was meant to create an idea of the thoughts that goes into their online image, while the topic of “narrative identity work” went in depth on how they actually execute their identity work via social media. Together, these topics were compiled to dive deeper into their identity construction with every new topic. Naturally, the topic “introduction” served as the kick-off and thus introduction of the interviewee. Here, a more detailed introduction than discussed before

¹ Lisa Weeda is a Dutch-Ukrainian writer, program maker, screenwriter, audiofan and virtual reality director. She teaches at the ArtEZ hogeschool voor de kunsten in Transmedia Storytelling / Writing for VR / 360video Project / Zine Making and helps second- and third-year students at the Rockacademy creating their online identity. More information on www.lisaweeda.com or Instagram @lisa_weeda.

² Melanie Esther coaches artists in finding and telling their unique story in order to achieve a strong branding and social media strategy. She works on release plans, (online) ticket promotion and increasing followings. She developed the ‘Find and Tell’ method for this and with it she creates coaching programs for artists, workshops and presentations. Melanie Esther works with – among others – Blanks and Typhoon and has previously shared her knowledge with ESNS, Popronde, ADE BEATS and No Man’s Land. More information on www.melanie-esther.nl or Instagram @xMelanieEsther.

³ As Hermanowicz (2002) states this is ideal to divide encompassing topical areas in which the questions are sequences. From there, possible interview-questions and additional follow-up probes were put together.

was presented, including their rights and possible risks. The topic “ultimate goal” was used as a way to end the interview on a positive note, together with demonstrating gratitude towards the interviewee (Hermanowicz, 2002).

In table 2, an overview of the original all concepts and operationalization can be found. The Dutch version, which was compiled in order to conduct most interviews in Dutch, can be found in appendix II.

Concept	Focus	Questions
Introduction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could you describe yourself: - What is your age, gender, etc. - Describe your work as a musician: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What do you do? o How long you have been active within the music field? - How would you describe your music?
Social media	Online strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which social media platform(s) are you on? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Why those? o Do you have a target audience? o How do you think your target audience relates to the social media platforms you are using? - How active are you in maintaining your channel(s)? - What is the importance of using social media for you? - Do you maintain multiple channels on the same platform? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Why? - What kind of content do you post/upload? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Why? Can you describe that a bit? o What would you like others to see? - How do you think this relates to your profession? - Do you think that social media has become a necessary asset? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How so?

Identity	Current identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you consider yourself more of a(n) musician/artist/entrepreneur/innovator/maker/ other? Multiple answers possible. - As what kind of ... do you see yourself? - How do you think you are influenced by other musicians? - How do you experience being a musician? - How do you think this is reflected in the online image you wish to present to your audience? - Is there more than one identity you (have to) show? - Why do you think this is the case/is not the case? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Would you say this depends on work? Can you describe that a bit? o Would you say this depends on the people in your life? Can you describe that a bit? - How do you feel about this?
	Development of identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would you say your identity has changed throughout the years? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How has your identity changed? o Why would you say your identity has changed? - Were you aware of this (possible) shift? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How did you notice this change? o How did the change make you feel? o Why do you think you were (not) aware of this change? - How have these changes influenced the way you see yourself?
Identity work	Online identity work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How have these changes influenced the way you represent yourself? - Are there other influences that have been important in this? - How has social media influenced the way you represent yourself? - Would you say you have an online strategy you work by? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Has this strategy changed with you throughout the years? o Are there specific tools you use?
	Sentiment towards online identity work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you feel about the way you present yourself online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Open your Instagram! - What would you say are the most important skills in representing oneself online? - Does it make you feel good to present yourself online? - And to receive feedback from others? - What do you think would happen if you stopped being online?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What would happen if you would stop connecting/communicating to your followers?
Narrative Identity work	Online stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What stories do you portray? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How big a part would you say sound plays in this? o How big a part would you say image plays in this? o How big a part would you say language plays in this? - Is there a specific goal you work towards with your stories? - How do you see yourself reaching that goal? - Are there stories you do not display online? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Why is this? - How successful would you say your online representations are? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What about failures? o Learning moments? - How do you think this has influenced your stories? - Do you think your online and offline stories are in sync? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Why (not)?
Ultimate goal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What would you ultimately like to achieve as a musician? - What would you still have to do in order to get there?

Table 2: Overview of concepts and operationalization

3.4. Data analysis

The data resulting from the conducted interviews was coded and analysed through the use of a thematic content analysis. According to Anderson (2007), thematic content analysis is the “most foundational of qualitative analytic procedures” (p. 1). A thematic content analysis is a method “for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). In short, it is a descriptive presentation of themes occurring across gathered data. Not only does this method reduce the data, it is very systematic and flexible (Schreier, 2013), which suits the goal of this research very well.

There are two ways in which coding schemes are usually developed (Syed & Nelson, 2015). The first one is an inductive data-driven bottom-up approach; the second one is deductive, theory-driven and rather top-down (Chi, 1997). Because the data for this research was collected through a topic list based on a theoretical framework, this naturally offered a set of overall themes to start the coding. This part can be seen as

deductive and theory-driven. However, in order to perform the thematic content analysis, a multi-staged process was executed that first generated a large list of initial codes from the data, bringing in the data-driven bottom-up approach as well (Syed & Nelson, 2015). While the topics were preliminary demarcated, it was still of great importance to remain open to finding the answers in the data in order to answer the research questions. Hence, a middle ground between the two ways was used in order to create the coding scheme. This is often considered as “abductive interpretation” of qualitative data, which allows for rigorous going-back-and-forth between theory-interpretations-and-data (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Thomas, 2010).

Therefore, the coding scheme was perceived as an iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means the generated coding categories were applied back to the original data in order to assure accuracy and specificity (Syed & Nelson, 2015). By doing this a couple of times and with the help of the theory, the preliminary coding scheme containing over a thousand codes was reduced and refined into four hundred in the end. While the initial amount of codes did capture more of the complexity in the data, this complexity decreased the usefulness and validity of the scheme as well. A balance between “parsimony and nuance” was therefore eventually found in order to create the static coding scheme (Syed & Nelson, 2015, p. 4).

The coding itself took place in three steps, for which the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti was used. The first step was open coding. By reading all interviews carefully, the data was sectioned off into codable units first and labelling them (Syed & Nelson, 2015; Boeije, 2010). The open coding yielded 409 codes. Similarities found during the open coding were noted to already gain insights on the data. Next in order was axial coding, grouping the previously created codes into subcategories (Boeije, 2010). In doing so the meaning of the codes were taken to a higher level of abstraction, gaining a sense of how the different codes relate and compare to one another (Schreier, 2013). The first round of axial coding was done by critically assessing the existing codes, merging them if possible, leading to 38 subcategories. The last step carried out was selective coding, creating six overarching themes, of which five will be used. The sixth theme is the introduction, which was only used in order to gather the interviewees’

demographics. Any questions about their identification or profession were reformulated and answered later on in the interviewee, making the data discussed in the introduction irrelevant for this analysis. The five remaining themes are discussed in the results and will be used in order to answer the research question.

The fact that the original data resulting from the interviews is in Dutch, has been a conscious choice. Since the topic of identity is a very personal concept in which narrative plays an important part in this research, I wanted to make sure all interviewees would be able to express themselves optimally. With all of the interviewees and myself included being Dutch native speakers, almost all interviews were therefore conducted in Dutch. The one interview conducted in English was by request of the interviewee himself, as he wanted to improve his ability to do interviews in English. Naturally, the choice was made to make him feel most comfortable and as he was very adequate the language switched to English. From personal experience speaking, this did not obstruct the interview in any way. This however means that the quotes used for the research results were altered. Due to the fact that all but one interview, were conducted in Dutch, a translation was in order. Translating the quotes to English does make for the possibility that the quote could be affected in terms of context and meaning (Lion, 2005). Additionally, for the flow of reading the results, the quotes have been altered in some cases by deleting some of the stumbling. However, the core message and thus narrative remained the same, which is the most important part for this research.

Table 3 shows a summary of the coding.

Axial coding	Selective coding	Extra overarching themes
Introducing themselves Describing music Additional jobs	Introduction	Introduction
Self-identity Personal growth Looking back at development	Personal development	Identity development
Ultimate goal Entrepreneurship Developing as a musician Feelings towards being a musician Difficulties of being a musician Inspiration	Professional development	

Thoughts on personal music		
Social media platforms Reasons for using social media Audience insights Online mission Online strategy Online strategy through the years Short term strategy changes (Corona) Social media activity Thoughts behind their online message Selecting content Imagery on social media Sound on social media Language on social media	Social media strategy	Online identity work
Positive feelings towards social media Negative feelings towards social media Difficulties of social media Results of social media Without social media	Reflecting on social media	
Social media content Creating online identity Multiple online identities Communication with audience Personal online execution Success	Online execution	

Table 3: Overview of codes and overarching themes

3.5. Validity and dependability

All research needs to demonstrate its quality. In doing so, validity and reliability are said to complement each other in assuring if a research is replicable and accurate in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Reliability is the degree to which results are consistent over time and produce a proper representation of the total population being studied. Validity on the other hand, is described as a way to test how truthful the research results are and if they truly measure what they were intended to measure (Golafshani, 2003).

While in quantitative research validity and reliability are of great importance, in qualitative research reliability is seen as irrelevant or even confusing (Stenbacka, 2001). Here, it is validity and dependability that matters when evaluating findings (Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Qualitative research seeks a different type of knowledge than does quantitative research, as in qualitative research the credibility depends on the researchers' ability (Golafshani, 2003). With dependability, the researcher should therefore be consistent with data by reporting all steps taken during the research in order to avoid confusion, describing the circumstances under which the research has been conducted, and by evaluating and testing the coding frame (Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012; Golafshani, 2003). Lastly, this corresponds with the necessary steps taken when performing a thematic content analysis, which served as the analysis method for this research (Schreier, 2013). The results emerging from the analysis are presented and discussed in the upcoming chapter.

4. Results

The chapter is divided into five subchapters based on the overarching themes around (1) personal development, (2) professional development, (3) social media strategy, (4) reflecting on social media and (5) online execution. Additionally, each subchapter is divided into smaller segments describing relevant aspects of the online identity of Dutch musicians and their narrative identity work.

4.1. Personal development

From the analysis it became clear that personal identity is partly enfolded and woven into the professional identity of Dutch musician entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss their personal development and how it influences their professional representation.

4.1.1. *Self-identity*

Personal development is closely related to the musicians' profession. All interviewees identify themselves as a musician. However, almost all acknowledge that this serves as a basis in order to do and aspire to become much more. This quote exemplifies this outcome perfectly:

“No, I think everything revolves around the fact that I’m a musician. And next to that I’m an artist, an entrepreneur and also an innovator. But it starts with the fact that I’m a musician, that I have that musical spirit and genes.” (Shirma Rouse)

Essentially, being a musician serves as a starting point to grow into an artist, entrepreneur and innovator. With growing experience in their profession, they layer different identities over another in complementary manner. They remain a musician, but also describe themselves as either artist, maker, innovator, entrepreneur or a combination of these. Nevertheless, most of them would rather describe themselves as an artist, which they consider to be more a comprehensive concept.

Being a musician is seen as making music without having to think about, for example, doing a show at a concert or preparing artwork for physical releases. By becoming an artist, they add these supplementary layers to creating the vision surrounding “doing music”.

“Because I really feel like an artist and I think the word ‘artist’ has more things to it. So like art, I’m doing art as an artist, as a singer, but also as a vocal coach. It’s art. It has more layers to, you know, being an artist. ‘Musician’ is not really what I would call myself in the end. I would rather say artist because I’m not only making music, I’m very visually oriented as well.” (Jordan Roy)

Additionally, many feel the need to identify as more than just one thing. They want all aspects of them to resonate with and be attached to their name. This is a logical process, as identity consists of “versions of our notionally unique features”, for which standing out is necessary in order to be seen (Coupland & Brown, 2012, p. 1).

“I’m an artist. But, I’m an artist in the broad sense of the word, so I’m not just an artist like ‘oh, I’m solely a singer’. No, I’m a lot of things.” (Shirma Rouse)

4.1.2. Personal growth

In order to be the kind of musician the interviewees aspired to be, gaining confidence as a person played a big role. They gained confidence through multiple ways, varying from simply getting better at certain aspects through time and age, to accepting that life has certain challenges and it cannot always be perfect or progress the way one desires. Here, self-acceptance is key, because people should be aware of who they ‘really’ are and accept this in order to gain confidence (Benwell & Stokoe, 2011). One thing that is certain: feeling insecure in one’s personal identity is translated directly into one’s professional identity.

“I was pretty insecure, for some reason, with everything, performing included. I do have some funny examples. For example, I took it very personally when I

made a mistake during a gig or... Yeah, I was very insecure about that. [...] Then with modelling, you're forced to see who you are, because yeah, you are exposed – almost like you're naked, sometimes you're actually naked – in front of a camera. Yes, that's just what you're doing. At some point you become more confident about that. That confidence has translated into my own work, my music at the moment.” (Willem 't Hart)

Confidence is thus seen by most as a process, helping oneself in becoming a better artist. Learning about the things that do not suit you is sometimes just as valuable as learning what does. Both are part of the process of gaining self-knowledge and working towards accepting but also becoming who you are and can be. Additionally, gaining more confidence as a person made it easier to be present in the online spheres. When feeling confident and positive, it is easier to create a corresponding image. According to Dooly (2017), we must not forget that our offline identities remain linked to our online ones. Furthermore, “positive identities are commonly defined as those that are valuable, good or beneficial” (Brown, 2015). Feeling confidence offline will thus be beneficial for one's online image.

Important personal traits become translated into other aspects of their life, such as is the necessity to keep improving and innovating. Most mention that they want to keep developing to strive for becoming the best version of themselves possible. They confess to constantly pushing themselves to keep on growing, both on a personal and professional level.

“At that point I thought to myself like ‘okay, I'm now on a certain level, doing a certain thing, but I think it's time to move on now. Otherwise I'll get stuck in what I'm doing right now'. And then you become some kind, or yeah, then others are going to catch up with you.” (Frank Wienk)

4.1.3. Looking back at development

A reflective appreciation of the process of personal growth is key. For most, it is easier to understand when looking back to where they have come from. This often turns out to

be a logical development, which is hard to see in the moment that the change is happening.

“Yeah, I never really thought about identity. I’m just always myself, but when I look back at it now it has changed indeed.” (José)

“In retrospect, I think ‘oh yes, that was a big step indeed’. Especially when looking at where I was in life at that time, I was still really young – at heart. Yes, I now look back at it as a really big change.” (Willem ‘t Hart)

This shows that becoming conscious of continuous change and having to work on their identity is easier when tracing back the steps and visualizing their change. Their music is a great indication for identity changes through the years. Looking back, they can truly notice their personal development through changes in genres, songs and lyrics, both when writing music and in preference of listening to music of others.

“[...] In that respect, my music is a really funny kind of timeline filled with stuff I started listening to, what I liked back then, what lyrics appealed to me and what I wrote myself. You can see it all in there.” (Florieke de Geus)

This underscores that identity is seen to be a continuous process, which they experience from within their development as artists. Because it is hard to see the change literally, the tracing of steps, recalling achievements or movements in genre become a tool of reflection to appreciate and become conscious of their changing identity. This shows the relevance of seeing identity as process and flow for understanding musicians’ identity today (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012).

4.2. Professional development

Professional development is inherent to the development of the identity as a musician, which serves as the basis for creating an online identity.

4.2.1. Developing as a musician

The analysis shows that their self-conceptions range from developing to changing through the years, to growing or adding to an existing identity. Their development is context-driven and happens through exposure with a new environment, gaining experiences and having encounters with various people, cultures, music, et cetera. It is largely intertwined with their personal development.

“I think everyone’s identity changes over time, because you see new things, you experience new things and you forget other things. You’re going to look at things differently, so yeah, that. Regardless of who you are, within your music you just change as a person, you learn new things and your opinion changes.” (Boye Ingwersen)

Naturally, a major part in developing an identity as musician is the music itself. Finding one’s sound is necessary, which adds to the importance of ‘really’ knowing oneself as a musician. Researching and trying out new music genres is a part of this.

“Different education directions I took, other music genres... I have done musical and also tried out the big bands to see if that was something for me, I researched things. And now it’s nice to look at where I am now and look back and what I’ve done, knowing that does not suit me anymore.” (José)

4.2.2. Entrepreneurship

Being an entrepreneur is part of being a musician. Even though this aspect might be less pronounced, underdeveloped or even “the thing they enjoy the least”, musicians need to be an entrepreneur as well. However, many musicians who are entrepreneurs might see themselves as ‘accidental entrepreneurs’ (Coulson, 2012). They may see it as a necessity derived from their professional identity: being a musician.

“And, besides, I would almost say that entrepreneurship is a necessary evil. It’s not necessarily the nicest thing to do – planting the seed and the launching part is – but not the actual converting it into work part.” (Carlo de Wijs)

Nevertheless, maintaining this entrepreneurial side to their profession is important. While a renowned musician may be more likely to have the means for hiring management or bookers, remaining in control may feel highly important for some, because it allows them to retain control over their development and “remain true to themselves”. This desire for maintaining personal autonomy and personal standards is seen as most important to being a musician-entrepreneur (Clarke and Holt, 2010). This is exemplified in the following quote:

“[...] But it really hurts my heart not to be in control of what I do and not to be autonomous. So, in that respect I had to become an entrepreneur, you know, otherwise people are going to do it for you and I would constantly be telling them they are not doing it well enough, so just do it yourself.” (Candy Dulfer)

4.2.3. Feelings towards being a musician

Most musicians love their profession and enjoy carrying it out. It is a way to express their thoughts, invest all energy and doing what they do best. For some, this is not a simple status or a profession, but it is their purpose and strength of their identity. They often did not choose to become a musician, but perceive that this is “who they are” – their process of being themselves. This shows that to most their professional identity is fused with their personal one.

“It’s not a state or status, it’s a ‘being’. Some people might see it as a status, but I see it as being. It’s just who I am. So, even if I would not perform on stage, it’s who I am. It’s part of my DNA, it’s a part of my roots, so.” (Shirma Rouse)

Although being a musician is regarded not to be easy, they do not mind baring the challenges. Some interviewees note how stressful being a musician can be. There is

pressure to always bringing out something perfect or better than the music or performance before. This pushes the musicians to continuously think about and critically evaluate if their materials are good enough or if they need to be better, do more and push themselves to the limit.

“Uhm, very stressful, ha! [...] No, I really enjoy it, but I notice – and that’s what I just said – that sometimes I don’t know when to stop. Then I just put too much pressure on things and I just, what I just said, forget that passion. Well, then you let your passion guide you instead of you guiding your passion.” (Boye Ingwersen)

4.2.4. Difficulties of being a musician

With so many active musicians, you need to stand out with both your music and in your image: you need to find your unique selling point. Naturally, gaining followers is heavily dependent on the kind of music one makes and for maintaining visibility, the frequency of performing. However, at the same time the quality of music needs to remain high and the musicians need sufficient energy and space to develop new things and new ideas. This is a constant battle between performing enough and taking time to work on ones’ music and oneself.

“So, because there are so many people that make music for the same target audience, that when it comes to an identity it’s important that it’s very clear what I do differently or what makes me unique, what distinguishes me from the others in order to be visible.” (José).

“There’s a tension between the two, because you have to execute enough projects and be visible in order to keep doing what you do, but it should not be so much that you just go from performance to performance without having the time to do other things and just develop. That takes time and brainpower. So, it always needs to be a balance between the two.” (Carlo de Wijs)

To ensure high quality, musicians not only need time but invest money as well. However, once they achieve a certain level of quality, their audience will continue to expect this, which puts them under pressure to perform and cater to the expectations of their audiences. This cycle can eventually come to cost a lot of money, which can be hard to maintain.

“Up till now I always thought it went very well with those videos and stuff. But it’s also difficult to continue to do that, because making those videos takes a lot of time and a lot of money, you know. People keep expecting this because the quality of the videos was very high. And that’s just difficult to maintain, I think.”
(Frank Wienk)

While it is important to maintain your passion and guide it, there is a tension between maintaining this passion and earnings. For the interviewees there is the desire to make music that comes from the heart and is an extension of themselves. Still, as a musician they want to be able to earn money doing the thing they love most: making music. They struggle between making music “they want to make” and making music to “make money”.

4.2.5. Inspiration

Naturally, inspiration is an important aspect of being a musician, since making music is a creative process. The musicians gain inspiration from almost everything: other musicians, other art disciplines, surroundings, museums, images, environment, politics, books, et cetera. Surprisingly and increasingly, this inspiration may come from social media. The musicians follow other people, mostly famous artists, and become inspired for what they could do on social media, how they can post things, and how they can enhance their presentation of selves:

“It’s so different how she’s posting things, but I always look up to her so she will be always in my, you know, my top 10, number one. To see how she posts things and how she’s using the social platforms in a way that no one else has done

before. Though sometimes the things she does aren't smart to do as an upcoming artist. She inspires, just like other singers that I follow, to have your own way of posting things, your own image, you know, and to always be innovative. She's definitely an entrepreneur. She's really, you know, doing things, things that nobody else has done. And like, people want to do the same." (Jordan Roy, discussing Beyoncé)

It becomes important to create something that other musicians want to recreate. They want to teach and train others. In particular, educating others on music history is seen as valuable. Lastly, receiving online messages from fans inspires them, and in turn, they want to let them know how their audiences inspire them in turn. Their inspiration becomes co-constructed and reciprocal.

4.2.6. Thoughts on personal music

Since music is part of their identity as a musician, they value making music they can support and feel a connection with. Commodification is seen as not remaining true to oneself. It becomes clear that by staying true to themselves, their music both feels and is perceived as most credible.

"I just do my own thing and it just is what it is. It [your music] is an extension of your personality, so that's the way I want to see it too." (Simone Roerade)

Some of the interviewees express their need for diversity in and experimenting with their music. Technology and innovation are seen as the way to create new music that triggers their audiences. According to Harju (2017), technology is evaluated as relative to self-improvement and empowerment. Thus, while aiming for new music these musicians simultaneously lift themselves.

4.2.7. Ultimate goal

Most interviewees expressed a wish to perform at well-known venues or join famous contests such as the Eurovision Song Contest. Overall, their main goal was to reach as

many people as possible, introducing them to their music and creating a solid fanbase. In the end, however, it all came back to the same wish:

“[...] But in the end, I think the goal is that I can make a living out of music. To be able to continue implementing my ideas.” (Frank Wienk)

4.3. Social media strategy

These days, maintaining a social media strategy is encouraged to reach not only many but also the right people. Platforms allow users to optimize their reach to the fullest through creating transparency of data analytics. However, the analysis makes clear that having a social media strategy and well-thought out actions for influencing a musicians' online identity are necessary. This section discusses the social platforms and the motivations behind online identity work in greater depth.

4.3.1. Social media platforms

While most of the interviewees have a personal website, these are not used often for promotional purposes. Instead, social media seems easier and the most fun way for self-promotion. The favorite platforms are Instagram and Facebook, of which Instagram is the most attractive. While almost all do own a YouTube channel, posting videos on a platform such as Instagram has a lower threshold for production costs and ease. Facebook is mostly used for creating a professional page, the so-called 'artist page', for which a personal page is needed in order to do so. The interviewees make the distinction between social media and streaming platforms, yet mostly leaving out popular streaming media platforms such as Spotify (Fleischer and Snickars, 2017).

About half of the interviewees admits to owning a Twitter account but either rarely using it or simply disliking the platform. To them, Twitter seems to be a platform where people can freely assert their ungrounded opinions, creating an unwanted and disliked online atmosphere. However, interviewees admit to be missing out on reaching particular target audiences by not using Twitter, therefore making it not an option to dismiss the platform.

Platforms such as Snapchat and TikTok are still not used at all. The musicians either do not agree with their respective audiences or do not see them as beneficial for spreading their music.

4.3.2. Reasons for using social media

There are two clear purposes for using social media – networking and promotion. First, it is used to reach and network with people worldwide.

Yes, it makes me very happy, because I see that you can now connect with so many people. Reaching many people is not the biggest plus, but connecting with them. Social media is the extension that was missing before; now you can reach so many people.” (José)

Through social media, it has become easier to create a fanbase. People find musicians easier and the threshold to follow them is low – as it often just requires one push of a button. Furthermore, it is an easy way of staying connected with people, updating them frequently and sharing your life, while keeping them at a ‘safe distance’. It is thus seen as a way to easily gain and control fame simultaneously.

Similarly, social media is seen as an easy way to connect with fellow musicians or bookers. Visibility is thus of great importance. By posting content in order to reach as many people as possible, worldwide, the musicians hope to create opportunities for themselves.

“I recently had a performance at a gala dinner of some study association, of which someone had heard me sing once during an open mic and then found me through social media and invited me to perform.” (Victor Steenmeijer)

Second, social media is most often used for promotional purposes. The musicians make a division between professional or personal accounts on social media. A platform such as Facebook allows them to create a so-called ‘artist page’, on which they can position themselves in a professional manner. Accordingly, as these platforms enable them to

reach audiences worldwide in ways that fit their ambitions, it has become rather easy to promote oneself. New songs, albums, merchandise, concerts, tour data, collaborations, videos, vlogs, and so on are all ways of promoting one's music or musical identity through social media.

“If there's an upcoming event, you have to tell people via Facebook. That's the way to reach people.” (Boye Ingwersen)

Nevertheless, while some of the interviewees enjoy using social media, most of them use it out of necessity. They simply cannot go without it as an artist. Social media platforms are THE way to create visibility these days, without using one, your audiences would miss you.

“I don't think that if you're a musician, a singer, a guitar player, whatever – I don't think you can do it. Well you can, but I don't... It's going to be hard not to work with social media because everyone wants to see or find you online. And if you're nowhere online, how are people going to know what you're doing?” (Jordan Roy)

4.3.3. Audience insights

According to Litt (2012), individuals publish their online content with an 'imagined audience' in mind. Gaining insights on those audiences is therefore key. The musicians understand that you need to know what works for your audience. You need to know on which platform your target audience is most active to reach them there. For example, all were well aware that Instagram is needed to reach a younger audience, as opposed to Facebook.

Furthermore, musicians seek to generate active and responsive audiences. This means, moving your audience from passively 'lurking' into the active “liking, commenting or sharing”. They feel that audiences on social media want to see the musician in the pictures, which is shown to generate more likes. Aesthetics are of great importance too, both in taking beautiful pictures and in maintaining a social 'feed' in a

way that looks cohesive and appealing. Additionally, audiences want quickness and to be triggered, something to catch their eye fast while scrolling through their feeds.

Because of the option to use the data analytics resulting from their content, they can now easily detect what works and what not. This way, learning about what your audience wants to see becomes a matter of numbers, although this does mean having to experiment:

“I had the very nice idea to make an animated video for a new song. I just thought ‘ah, something different than what others do within my genre’. I’m still really excited about it, but my audience didn’t like it. They didn’t get it. After ten singles with the same videos, they were still like ‘why didn’t you make a video with you in it for the eleventh song?’ While I really thought this was more fun. ‘Yeah, but we want to see YOU’. But I was like ‘there are already ten videos out there with me in it’.” (José)

It becomes clear that the audience is most interested in the person behind the musician. While Facebook is said to be used most for the artist page, on Instagram, many of the interviewees share both their personal and professional life, as this is what their audiences want to see. Audiences are less interested in opinions as they want to see more of the musician in question and get to know them better through social media. However, this creates a certain pressure around expectations regarding “who they are”, because the audience wants to see the musician in question in a certain way. If the musicians aim to reach as many people as possible, they must cater and sustain this presentation of self. They must cater to this kind of image. This may include having to accept that people want to see them a certain way.

“People want to see how I’m lying on the couch, whether I’m in the gym or biking. It’s very strange, it has nothing to do with your artistry, but you tie people to you because they get to know you through social media.” (Shirma Rouse)

“Yes, appearance is very important to people. If you take a nice, fresh photo with a friendly smile, cheerful, sparkling: that appeals to everyone. I often try to do all kinds of things, like sharing an important political thing, but then you see that they don’t like it. They prefer the blond hair and a happy smile.” (Candy Dulfer)

This highlights the ambiguities of creating, forming and upholding their professional-personal selves on social media. What the audience wants and what they like may only be one version and one layer of what the musicians show and how they are. This underscores the multi-faceted and mediatized nature of identity (Dooly, 2017; Förnas & Xinaris, 2013).

4.3.4. Online mission

All interviewees value positivity within the online spheres the most. According to Brown (2015), positive identities are seen as the most beneficial, favorable and competent. Therefore, the musicians often share positivity, joy, love and light on their online profiles. These positive messages are often constructed to add something good to the world and make people feel they matter. However, social media enhances this drive even further. Everything the musicians do has to be an enlargement of their message, both off- and online.

“[...] This is actually just an enlargement of what I already propagate. Namely that as a woman you can simply be super powerful.” (Simone Roerade)

4.3.5. Online strategy

Interestingly, none of the interviewees claims to currently utilize a well-defined social media strategy. Either they are still working on one or feel it is not right to maintain one. Some sort of natural resistance and insecurity to work out a strategy keeps them from utilizing social media to the fullest. They want to do what feels good to them and remain authentic in the process. Authenticity is seen as remaining loyal or integral to one’s past, heritage and ethos, thus acting according to one’s existing and known conception self (Brown, 2015; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

“But I don’t really have a strategy, I don’t feel anything for a calibrated strategy from professionals. Maybe I should, it could work better, but also... It doesn’t feel like an extension of myself. So, for now I just base my work on personal feelings.”
(José)

This shows, identity work over social media is basically an extension of the self. This is the hallmark of media, as defined by McLuhan (McLuhan, 1994). Being on social media needs to be authentic, just as much as the strategy should feel authentic and fit the person. There is no “one-size-fits-all strategy”; instead it needs to be tailored according to the person behind it, making it still an extension of the self. If the musicians rarely have a strategy, it might be because they have not been trained to think strategically – like a manager –, but rather creatively. However, their continuous drive to become more of themselves, such as being more creative and more entrepreneurial, may extend to becoming more strategic over time.

However, many interviewees do manage a content plan and all state to target specific audiences. A constant flow of content is necessary to attract people to their online profile. Some even delved into the right timings of their posts, by making use of the analytics of their page. This fortifies the importance of audience insights and shows the targeting of one’s audience. Through posting regularly and the creation of unique content, engagement amongst their audiences is boosted. According to Van Dijck (2013), while users perform different strategies on different social media platforms, many will synchronize their profiles. In this case, linking the content uploaded on one platform to that of another. This way, content is spread equally across multiple platforms with the ease of just clicking a few buttons, reaching multiple audiences at once.

To ask people directly to engage in content or to create a certain aesthetic, the musicians use online tools. They use filters, polls, sharing location, tools for asking you questions and for sharing songs in order to tell their story to their audience. So, while they feel not to have an online strategy, they do almost all make use of smaller strategies, as one of the interviewees has called it. Which means, they are in fact still “practicing an online strategy”.

“So, I use small strategies, and I read up a lot about it, but there’s not one strategy that really suits me. So, I better just do it based on feeling, intuition and that bit of knowledge about it I do have.” (Candy Dulfer)

This highlights how the identity work as a musician entrepreneur carries traces of strategy work, because it uses features and affordances of social media that inherently make one act in strategic manner. Strategy work has become a practice which they have adapted without consciously addressing it (Horst & Hitters, 2020), which shows how the different facets of identity work as a musician blend with those on an entrepreneur.

Their online content strategy largely depends on their work situation. If they are busy or working towards an event, their strategy may involve posting more actively. As the interviewees state, with a performance or tour, their online content will become more promotional because they want people to come and see them. Making people curious and gaining visibility over social media then becomes the main goal. Additionally, and also naturally, when there is more to capture there is more to post. This remains the ultimate basis for their online strategy: sharing their music with the world.

“Well, no... Only when there’s an upcoming event. If you have an event you can work towards it and then you’ll think about posting something every week or certain content. You already asked me about a strategy, but then you’ll have a strategy. We’ll make a plan based on when the event will take place, and then we’ll have a look at what to post on Instagram and Facebook in anticipation of the event. Then you really start building from there: you’ll have a goal and something to work towards.” (Boye Ingwersen)

Thus, although the interviewees might not be fully aware of it, most of them are still maintaining a social media strategy. Even if they just take certain aspects into account and leave others behind. This underlines the contextual side of identity work on social media well. During the times of more content, the content dictates what to post. The

audiences define what they want to see. In reciprocal manner the artist co-creates their online identity as musician-entrepreneur with their audiences.

4.3.6. Online strategy through the years

As identity is adaptable to time and change, changes within social media platforms will ultimately affect ones' representation on it. From the analysis we learn that when platforms change, audiences change with it and the user has to change their strategy accordingly. For instance, with the rising popularity of Instagram, the interviewees noticed a lot of Facebook users were gradually shifting their preference of gathering information to Instagram.

“What I just told you about artists being on Facebook, it's increasingly shifting to Instagram, so you want to post something about the projects you've done in the past and what you're currently doing on there as well.” (Florieke de Geus)

This difference in target audiences across the various social media platform has to be taken into account. In addition, also the content changes and thereby the online narrative they create. This shows, an online strategy changes with online developments. However, it changes and develops, as do users. Through trial and error and in relation to ones' target audience you gradually learn how to represent yourself online.

“[...] Yes, together with your identity, you put it together: who you are and how you present yourself. In doing so, you also learn what works for your target audience as well.” (Boye Ingwersen)

The online self-representation and its narrative identity work is in constant motion and never fixed. Even older posts can be shown again, and interpreted in a new light. Older posts can be deleted due to current irrelevance or to fit the current trend. This is the hallmark of an identity as process (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012) and underscores the continuous nature of identity work (Brown, 2015). Interestingly, almost all interviewees admit to delete posts they perceive as no longer representative of their current identity.

This is one of the advantages of social media. Social media may be seen as ones' portfolio, as one of the interviewees titled this, for which the user can select what materials to present to audiences and what to exclude.

“Well, because, sometimes I'm thinking 'okay, is this still in line with me as an artist?' [...] So, yes. And sometimes I'm just checking to see if this [content] is still what I want to be on my social media account, or not. And if not, I just delete it.”
(Jordan Roy)

4.3.7. Short term strategy changes (Corona)

As the interviews were conducted amidst the Covid-19 pandemic it was a very difficult time for the music industry and the musicians. As all performances and concerts were cancelled, they did not have many options to do their work and generate income. To many, social media became an even more important tool to stay connected to their audiences and to provide others with positivity and music.

'A time for reflection', is what most interviewees call this period. As social distancing became the new normal, everything had to move online. As the outbreak of this pandemic and the consequences following were something unforeseen, it quickly became clear that the musicians needed to adapt quickly. They needed to ask reflective questions about the nature of their work in strategic manner: If it remains impossible to perform, how to move further from this? Will everything become digital from now on? And how will I be able to generate enough income if most online platforms, social media, are free to use?

“This [pandemic] happening makes it super clear that something needs to change. Because no one could've ever imagined the entire performance world standing still. That performing would simply not be possible. That's just unthinkable, but it's happening right now. So, you now see people moving to everything digital.” (Frank Wienk)

These questions are yet unanswered, and maybe the answer emerges as they go along. One thing is certain: musicians look at social media differently now compared to before the pandemic outbreak. However, in this moment, the future is uncertain. Their financial struggles might remain. Luckily, people working in cultural sectors can receive help from the Dutch government. In addition, musicians support each other, for example, by promoting each other or lesser known artist via social media.

“These are challenging times for everyone. Fortunately, well, that’s not the right word, but I thought I was the only one who, despite my success... I could fall over very quickly with my company now... I really have to request help. I thought I had spent too much money on clothes in my life or something. Well, that’s still true. But I hear everyone has the same problem.” (Candy Dulfer)

This shows the crisis was a reflective moment in their identity work. It put things into perspective and may create a new understanding for how they conceive and present themselves.

Due to the nature of musicians’ identity work, the crisis touches the topic of content creation. As we have learned, the posting frequency is often related to the amount of work coming in. Therefore, it is no wonder that some of the interviewees are concerned about reaching and engaging with their audiences, if there is a lot less content available now. These worries are reflected in the following quote:

“During corona you have of course much less activities, in fact almost none anymore, but you still want to post because that’s the goal, that’s the bond you have with your fans and followers. But now I’m thinking: how can I now reach my followers?” (José)

However, one thing that becomes clear is that everyone is determined to preserve a positive attitude online. In these times, people need music to lift them up. At least that is something that some of the musicians believe they can offer:

“And deep down you know that people always find a lot of support in music, some even in your music. So, I thought to myself let’s just do a song. Well, I had forgotten the impact this could have.” (Candy Dulfer)

This relates back to the drive of why they do music and what they want to achieve. It resonates their identity work on social media, as they narrate about support, positivity and the impact they can have to inspire others.

4.3.8. Social media activity

The social media activity differs a lot between musicians. In general, musicians with accounts of over two thousand followers tend to be more active. But again, this activity depends on factors such as the amount of work, the kind of work or even the mood they are in. Some use social media on a daily basis, while others claim to be not that active. Most are active on their personal pages, however, again for some their multiple online accounts are linked through to make sure all are equipped with content.

“Sometimes I think I’m not active enough active, well active... I’m using Instagram daily. Every day I will say something on my story.” (Jordan Roy)

“Yes, I regularly post covers and stuff, so I’m active in that regard. But I’m not active in thinking that I need to post a cover every week or even Monday. I post whenever it suits me or when I feel like it. Sometimes this means posting three times a week and other times I don’t post anything for three months.” (Victor Steenmeijer)

One thing is certain, there is an overall pressure to be active online, to the extent that some are stressing out even talking about it. Only few are able to evade from this pressure and post whenever it suits them. Although, this only relates to the musicians with the least number of online followers.

4.3.9. Thoughts behind their online image

According to Boyd and Ellison's (2007) framework of identity construction in social media, one of the core concepts is impression management. As this concept deals with personal identity formation it is closely related to the thoughts behind forming an online image (Dooly, 2017). Wanting to make the right impressions is therefore very important. Accordingly, authenticity is one of their main impressions. They want their online image to reflect their offline identity and in doing so stay close to their true self.

"I just want people to get to know me the way I experience myself." (Shirma Rouse)

Conveying who they are relates to presenting their multifacetedness. The musicians want to be seen as a creator, artist, connector, coming together in one brand or self-image. By sharing all aspects of their offline personality online, they hope to create this image that attracts all of those interested. To them, it is very important to create an understanding of all the things they do and make this reflect in their online identity. They wish to create an online identity that captures their multifaceted and creative drive.

"Yes, you just have to understand that I'm not just someone who sits behind their Hammond, but someone who also researches and develops. That's more my... that's also the image I want to have." (Carlo de Wijs)

They balance this richness of who they are with the need to select content. This is visible below.

4.3.10. Selecting content

All of the interviewees admit not to share everything online. They select their content based on their narrative structure, meaning the story and image they wish to convey (Downing, 2005). What they post becomes a selection of what is possible. It becomes a fragment and an abstraction of their sense of self.

“There’s a lot I don’t show. You can’t show what you’re doing all the time. Well it would be possible, and some people do this, but I think on social media you only see a small part of what I do in real life.” (Willem ‘t Hart)

There is also a fine line of how much of their “private lives” they want their audiences to see. Most interviewees do not feel comfortable sharing their private life with their online audiences, especially when it comes to sharing content involving others. They feel it is “unnecessary” and not directly connected with their music. This extends to what they feel they should comment on or participate in:

“This I because I don’t think it’s necessary for everyone to have an opinion about it, because I think in the end everyone will want to say what they think on social media. And I don’t want to or need to hear other people’s opinions about it, because I myself probably already have enough fun or difficulties in such situations. That’s enough for me. Also, to guarantee the privacy of loved ones. That’s also a reason.” (Florieke de Geus)

As not all musicians see a problem in sharing personal content, it is clear this depends on their branding. If the content fits the brand and the image they want to convey, posting about their private life can feel more authentic and suitable. Therefore, this decision must be attuned to the person and their brand.

Interestingly, their narrative identity work emphasizes positive aspects and notions. They want to share the good parts of their lives and career, creating the best version for people to see. They are often not comfortable with sharing negativity, political opinions or whining on social media. This eventually leads to them only posting positive things, leaving out other parts. This is strongly connected to the notion of identity work, in which “some identities are emphasized and others are ignored or downplayed” (Benwell and Stokoe, 2011, pp. 3). To conclude, most interviewees feel their audiences do not have to see everything happening to them.

4.3.11. *Imagery on social media*

Image and intention are key for narrative identity work on social media. Sound and language are important means to shape an online narrative too. Interestingly, most interviewees would choose image over sound on social media.

“Then, to me it’s all about the music but if there could be no image and I would have to make a choice between the two, then I would have to choose image.”

(José)

“They can come and hear sound during my performances, that’s also very important. But visuals are number one, also because I like visuals myself.”

(Candy Dulfer)

This underscores the visual aspect of narrative identity work, because you need to be seen and imagined. Apparently, on social media looks and aesthetics are deemed very important, even when promoting their sound or music. Photos usually generate more likes than a video or sound. This means, one does not create a post on social media without an image. At the same time, the musicians do not want to give away too much but instead want the spark interest amongst their audience in order to get them to come to their concerts.

“Well, I just try to make people curious about the live performances. I’m not going to give away too much. If you post everything, people will be like ‘I already know what it’s like’.” (Simone Roerade)

Lastly, this choice can be assigned to the quickness of social media. As people scroll down their feed, they want to be able to quickly absorb new information coming by. With images, a simple glance suffices to see what it is about, while with videos one has to pause scrolling to gain information. Therefore, it is no wonder that images receive more likes than videos do.

4.3.12. *Sound on social media*

Of course, sound and visuals are always connected on social media. However, some believe that sound is always the essence, even on social media.

“You may have poor imagery but fantastic sound, so people will continue to listen. And yet it’s all related to one another! But sound is still essential.” (Shirma Rouse)

But many recognize that in the current setup and how we consume social media, sound is imperfect. This plays a big role in choosing image over sound. For example, recording music on a phone is not the same as recording it in a studio. Since social media is about quickness and accessibility, it can become quite the effort to put out something worth listening to.

“But it’s imperfect on social media. If you want to record something spontaneously, like right now with all those nice videos from home, it’s a disadvantage having a saxophone because if you put your iPhone too close the microphone will distort immediately. Saxophones are very loud. It’s the biggest stumbling block: things not sounding nice.” (Candy Dulfer)

4.3.13. *Language on social media*

Although language is important for emphasizing ones’ online message and identity, the interviewees agree that it is not the main focus when posting on social media. Captions are thus used to emphasize a post. However, this does not come without its difficulties. According to the interviewees, one of the main struggles is the language of posting. Especially on social media, there is a need for finding a universal language both Dutch people and others across the world can understand, often English (Al-Dabbagh, 2005). However, the struggle resulting from this is whether to post in Dutch or English, as the interviewees state that not everyone amongst their Dutch audience takes pleasure in this. Additionally, the author must master the English language to the extent of being

able to properly express oneself. To many, in the end the possibility of reaching audiences worldwide outweighs this struggle.

“[...] It’s very important that if you make a story with a post that it’s correct. That you write something that really suits your post. And I think it’s very important that you write in English, that you think about the audience outside the Netherlands. At least for me, I have a bigger audience abroad than I do here, people who live outside the Netherlands. Yeah, and that it’s correct English.” (Willem ‘t Hart)

Yet, all make sure to think about “the message” they want to accompany their images or videos, and they make sure to put in something personal.

“I think about it when I write something. It has to be right; it has to suit me. I need to feel connected to it. But in the end, it’s really secondary to the music. It’s not a main focus for me, so I would definitely give it a lower score.” (Frank Wienk)

This may relate to the old idea that “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1994), which highlights the way in which visuals, music, sound, text and motion become integrated in today’s social media.

4.4. Reflecting on social media

Narrative identity work emphasizes and pushes the musicians to reflect on their feelings, what they want to post, how they present themselves, and their challenges.

4.4.1. Positive feelings towards social media

Few musicians like social media, although there are still mixed feelings involved as the pressure remains. However, most agree that it does feel good to present oneself online, especially when this is done in a way that feels close and authentic to them.

“Uhm, yes. Yes! I also really enjoy it. I genuinely like it.” (José)

“Sometimes I wish I wouldn't – I wish I didn't have to, you know, because it takes up so much time. But I do have to say, I really like it. I like to take pictures; I like to edit them; I like to use filters on them, or whatever. So, I like it. It's a little bit of both. Yeah, I like to present myself on Instagram.” (Jordan Roy)

4.4.2. Negative feelings towards social media

Presence on social media is not a choice but often an unwanted necessity. The pressure to be online predominates and this has a big impact on their lives. Some musicians call this out as mentally unhealthy as this pressure overpowers both their feelings and actions:

“So, what I said earlier, sometimes I have those days when I really don't feel like it at all and then I just want to get rid of it all, but I just can't. It's simply not possible because you would no longer exist, or something... Yes, this sounds very intense, but it's true...” (Florieke de Geus)

As platform users only want to share their best version, images on social media are crooked and not real. People choose specific parts of stories to share and not their actual identity online. Their online identity therefore becomes constructed to fit a certain standard.

“I think everyone has different masks and different identities anyway. And I think that's also one of the pitfalls of social media, everyone only shares their 'happy face'.” (Victor Steenmeijer)

However, this brings along certain risks. By solely seeing peoples' lives filled with positive stories, viewers in less fortunate situations can feel insecure: they are left with the feeling that what others have is better, leaving them to always wanting more. This is exemplified in the following quote:

“Well, I think social media can have different outcomes. It can, like I said, be very destructive. Like, I'm following different kinds of people and I'm like ‘oh my goodness, I want to look like this or I want to have this or...’, or whatever. So, it really depends on how you're looking at it, who you're following. And to not always be effected by that.” (Jordan Roy)

4.4.3. Difficulties of social media

The necessity to maintain online profiles, the pressure and expectations cause social media to be difficult. The technological developments encourage constant connectivity and multi-tasking, persuading users to check their profiles whenever, often during performances or other tasks (Baldauf et al., 2017). Before social media musicians were dependent on managers and the industry, however, nowadays they have to maintain their visibility themselves. Due to the pressure to maintain their online presence, the online competition is fierce. Accordingly, expectations from the audience rise and with it the pressure to ensure participation, causing a vicious circle.

“Now we have to fight against what people expect, what you should look like, what's interesting for the industry.” (Shirma Rouse)

The musicians do not maintain an online strategy as it is hard to find the right content, reach the right people and balance quality and quantity. Here, algorithms are of major influence. The computer decides who sees what content according to its quality and the time and thought invested in it (Van Dijck, 2013). Connectivity and narrative become integrated: “the more people buy into a story, the better the brand is promoted” (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 206). Therefore, maintaining active, consistent and focused branding is necessary to survive (Collard, 2012).

“I think that's indeed a thing that all creative people will encounter who have to earn their money through it [social media]. Yes, the division between personal and professional, and quality and quantity, is just a bit difficult.” (Florieke de Geus)

“I mean, I can post something, but the dynamics it produces also largely depend on the people who read it, if they respond, if they even see it [...]. And the biggest factor that you can't control are the algorithms of the big companies. I think that's perhaps the biggest factor you can influence the least.” (Carlo de Wijs)

It becomes clear that the audience controls one's success rate. When more people like the content, the promotion and success following from this increase. Yet, this is another difficulty. Content is created for audiences to compel them to engage with it, but in the end, the creator cannot control the outcome as one cannot directly control online audiences. It sometimes remains a guessing game as you have to find out what works and what does not.

“I mean, your audience always decides. You can't... Even if you have such good materials to post [...], you can never force another person to like it. It can't be forced.” (José)

Because of the difficulties of social media, creating an online identity becomes a dilemma for some:

“Well, of course it's always some kind of dilemma: how would you like to see yourself and how would you like other to see you? And how do you see yourself?” (Carlo de Wijs)

4.4.4. Results of social media

Social media changed the entire industry. Musicians now have the opportunity to independently sell their music to a global audience and to promote themselves (Collard, 2012). The necessity of signing with some label has decreased as online platforms makes for easy access for both musicians and their audiences. Likewise, promotion through social media has replaced traditional and music industry-related marketing (Collard, 2012).

“[...] That’s actually because of the change that social media brought throughout the music industry and the entire media industry. We started with: you’re a musician; you make an CD; the CD is released by a company; you look for a booker that does stuff for you; you look for a manager; you look for a publisher that will release your music. All these functions have now become much more detached from one another.” (Carlo de Wijs)

Social media provides fast-expanding and far-reaching network opportunities, which both known musicians, upcoming musicians and of the so-called do-it-yourself (DIY) music communities utilize (Hoare, Benford, Jones and Milic-Frayling, 2014). To them, social media is a way of establishing credibility without losing independence. If discovered, it is an easy way of becoming famous in a short amount of time, especially for unsigned musical acts (Collard, 2012). This testifies to the fact that because of social media worldwide connectivity has become the new norm.

“Well, if you really want to become more well-known, [...] I think that through social media you could do so very quickly and easily. So, that you’re no longer necessarily tied to a management or something to attract an audience.” (Victor Steenmeijer)

“Obviously most of my followers live in Holland, but I also have followers from around the world, maybe not that many, but they live in countries the UK, America, Guatemala, I saw someone in Italy, Spain. So, it’s the only way for me to connect with them.” (Jordan Roy)

Online self-identities are influenced by the rules of social media and audiences: it is no longer solely about identity, as there are many extrinsic factors influencing this online representation. Not only are these influences not steerable, they can make representations less real. To audiences, the online representations of musicians no

longer revolve around their artistry; instead people want to know more about the person behind all of it.

“But I think it has to do with that people... it’s just that artistry isn’t about what you do anymore; it’s about who you are. People want to know if you have misery in your life, you know. It’s no longer like Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin, that you didn’t know when they got married, how many children they had. Nobody cared! And now, people want to know what you were wearing, who you were with. It has nothing to do with... So, basically how good you are with social media and how beautifully your photos are edited say how many followers you’re going to have.” (Shirma Rouse)

4.4.5. Without social media

Only few believe a world without social media would be feasible, as we have known a time without. Although it would be difficult, it would not matter as long as they get to make music. However, despite pressure and difficulties, the interviewees would not want to go back to a time without social media as it would be harder to execute their work – even though it would bring them more peace. No social media equals no visibility, which means they would have to go back to the ‘old-ways of promotion’ and lose their independence and network. To some, their projects are depending on it:

“Well, I think that would have a lot of impact. That really wouldn’t be possible, looking at where I am right now and what I’m developing. You can’t separate these things at the moment.” (Carlo de Wijs)

4.5. Online execution

The execution of the narrative identity work is the last step in creating an online identity and is discussed in this last subchapter.

4.5.1. Social media content

Music remains the basis for the musicians' content. They all post or repost content of performances, new releases, projects or rehearsals. Interestingly, there is a division noticeable when it comes to posting about private life. We have come to learn that some only share the content in relation to their profession, while others are more comfortable with sharing additional insights about their lives – excluding other people, due to privacy reasons, but for example their daily routines. Instagram is the most popular platform for sharing personal information and insights, as most post their daily life there. While maintaining a balance in posting pictures and videos, Instagram Stories provides audiences with a closer look in their lives. Different from posting photos, which mainly contain highlights, Instagram Stories stay up online for twenty-four hours. This limited period of time enables users to share casual content in a documentary-like manner. As ones' online feed is meant to endure a longer period of time, more thought goes into posting content there.

“Because, of course, I pay attention to that when posting a photo, making sure that it's a photo that can last a lifetime and that it's, yeah, of course you just want to look good in it. So, it's a selection criterion for photos and videos, making sure it looks good enough so it can be viewed for a long time.” (José)

4.5.2. Creating online identity

It is important to know oneself in order to create an online identity that is true to the self (Van Dijck, 2013). Remaining 'true', 'real' and 'authentic' is most important to the musicians and provides content that makes them happiest. Simultaneously it takes less effort to create it, while the outcome that results from this both lifts up the maker and users.

“Yes, this is what it is. I don't have to show anything other than who I am. Just me in regard to my music, that's the same thing. Yes, I don't have to consciously search for the identity I want to show, because it's just there. The only thing is to

look for which photo or video fits this identity best, qualitatively. That's the thing. No, this is exactly what it is." (José)

"I'm not going to make it more beautiful than it is; I'm not going to make it any less than it is either." (Simone Roerade)

Their online identity needs to be clear to the observer. As some are still in search and others see their online identity change alongside their music, it can be difficult to do so. Both the thematic and visual aspect need to fit together and create an image that feels whole and logical in order for audiences to connect with it. Goals need to be set in order to build an online identity from there. For most musicians, their music is the goal and thus has to be the center of attention.

"To me it's very much about the content that I create and I try to convey it as well as possible. I'm trying to make it less private in the sense that at least... yeah, that's a good one. I have actually never thought of this before or said it out loud, but I think that I never really wanted it to be about myself, but about the music and the sounds." (Frank Wienk)

4.5.3. Multiple online identities

The need to identify and be perceived as more than just one thing is important to the musicians. They want all sides of their identity represented within their online identity. Some musicians therefore create multiple online pages on which they post various stories to make their identity more manageable for both themselves and their audiences. Stories position users within various sorts of roles, connecting certain actions and representing specific moralities (Davies and Harré, 1991). As projects within the musicians' lives are not always coherent, multiple identities distributed over multiple pages can be a way to integrate all into ones' life or the sense of self (Downing, 2005).

“Yes, I do. Yeah, those are two different pages indeed. So, I have an artist page and a regular ‘Simone Roerade’ one, on which I also post when I have cooked something tasty. I like doing that.” (Simone Roerade)

“Because of course, when I do gospel concerts, not everyone is going to like gospel music. It’s good that everyone knows that I do this too, but this way you can focus more on the people who are actually interested. You can give them something.” (Shirma Rouse)

A variety of content is uploaded on the various pages, meant to serve different audiences. According to Davies and Harré (1991), storylines are produced in order to position oneself, to grasp different storylines concerning the diversity of the individual together in order to direct the audience towards a logical conclusion or ending. The official name for this is ‘emplotment’ (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 141). It is used to make sense out of the diverse identities one individual has. While some musicians separate these identities, others explore ways to bring these multiple identities together, and thereby construct their identities through narrative engagement (Soreide, 2006). Especially Instagram is seen as the platform to do this. In addition, while there are multiple sides to ones’ identity, not all are convinced this means that one person actually possesses multiple identities.

4.5.4. Communication with audience

Communication is key for maintaining a fanbase. Social media provides a more personable factor, as audiences feel that they are dealing with the musicians themselves (Collard, 2012). Furthermore, the voices of fans are more likely to be heard and facilitate “co-creation” with the musician, which in its turn creates deeper connections between musicians and fans.

“Well, fans are going to leave comments, and if you respond to them, they feel addressed and they remain active and you remain active too. It’s very important for maintaining your fanbase, so to speak.” (Boye Ingwersen)

This part of social media is most enjoyable, as the musicians both get the opportunity to connect with fans directly and simultaneously establish a greater feeling of authenticity and credibility. By participating in online communication, they stay digitally relevant (Collard, 2012).

The ability to respond to all fans that are reaching out is dependent on the numbers of fans. Naturally, the more followers the musicians have on social media, the harder it is to keep up with responding them all. However, all musicians strive to maintain their fanbase in an honest manner by trying to do this themselves whenever possible.

“Well, I’m a bit stubborn, so I still do a lot online myself. But I do it for a reason, because firstly, yes, it’s also a bit selfish maybe, but the feeling I get when answering someone in Korea. He writes: ‘I’m from Korea and I like your music so much’. Then I write back something like ‘thank you so much, I was there last year and I’m trying to come back again soon. Love Candy’. I don’t always have the time for it, but when I do... Then I get back: ‘oh, I’m crying! Are you really Candy?’. You know, that’s just wonderful for both your ego and socializing. It’s just very beautiful, so that’s why I really like doing it.” (Candy Dulfer)

Not only the communication between musicians and fans is important, but the communication between musicians amongst each other is as well. They use online communication for offering and receiving feedback to one another and from their audiences. For example, by asking the audience questions one can quickly gather audience insights. In addition to asked feedback, the musicians sometimes receive unasked feedback as well.

“Asked and unasked feedback. Sometimes I ask them. Before I started this, or in the beginning of this year, I showed my followers my top three, I think, of pictures from the past year. I asked them what they would like to see more of this year, so they could respond. I’ve asked them if I should talk more in English or in Dutch,

with a poll. So, I really do ask feedback every now and then, so it gives me more insight of my followers. I also follow the insights of Instagram itself on my account. And every now and then I get feedback unasked and it really. I read it and sometimes I do something with it.” (Jordan Roy)

4.5.5. Personal online execution

Overall, the musicians get positive feelings from looking at their own personal online profile(s). Their feed is a representation of memories, which concern mostly happy ones. It also displays an overview of their current stories, in which many recognize their online mission. Social media feeds are extensions of themselves to the outside world and therefore representative of what they stand for.

“When I look at my own feed, I feel happy because I see the things I've done so far. The things that I achieved, the things I like to do, it's... I see my life and I'm really happy with my life.” (Jordan Roy)

However, the feeling of pressure to post and always be ‘on’ remains when looking at their feed:

“Ah, right away I get a bit nervous because I’m thinking about having to post something again soon.” (Florieke de Geus)

4.5.6. Success

To many their online stories are successful. Some musicians note that the success of their stories is currently missing as they regard their online activity or following as too little. Despite the difficulties and daily struggles, all remain true to themselves when sharing their stories online.

“I think it’s successful. Especially looking at where I come from, yes. You know, what I said about the first twenty years of my life being quite difficult. Yes, I think

the things I've done despite this, I think it's quite an achievement and I'm proud of that. So, I see that as a success." (Willem 't Hart)

To maintain success evaluation is required. As both the platforms and its audiences change and ones' online success is closely linked to their offline success, standing still too long is not an option as adapting to time and change is necessary. By continuing to evaluate and reflect, success and feelings towards success can be assured.

"It's actually going very well. I do have the idea that it's now getting quiet again. For me, this is really some kind of tipping point, you know. You always notice that afterwards, but this is at least some sort of point where I feel things are going to change, things are going to be different." (Frank Wienk)

It all comes back to the synergy between the interviewees' offline identity development and online identity work: their personal and professional lives, branding and social media are in constant connection with one another.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research has been to gather insights on how Dutch musicians develop their self-identity through narrative identity work over social media. This development of self-identity depends on a variety of factors that are both intertwined with and ever adapting to current trends and changes over time. As the self is reflexive and constructed through social and cultural context (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008; Brown, 2017; Stets & Burke, 2000), it becomes clear that nowadays social media plays a large role in its supporting, facilitating and shaping this construction of identity (Dooly, 2017; Fornäs & Xinaris, 2013).

Being an entrepreneur is a necessary component to being a musician (Weber, 2004), of which “being online” has nowadays become a part too. Surprisingly, for the creation of one’s online-identity, creating a well-thought out strategy seems to be a taboo. “Being strategic” and “having a strategy” is viewed as being ‘inauthentic’, which is something the musicians hold dear when conveying and building their online identity both for themselves and to/with their audiences. In order to be authentic, it is important to be aware of the self. Being a musician is who they are and therefore often merges their personal and professional identity. Identities are influenced by events and lifelong experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007), which makes the awareness of their personal and professional development a key factor in knowing one’s self and being able to convey this across the internet. This personal and professional self, together with their music, establishes the basis for the musicians’ online identities: the brand they wish to communicate.

It is clear that online self-identities are intentionally developed for the social, online spheres through the use of narrative identity work. Although the musicians might be unaware of their use of online strategies, these are still used to communicate their online identities to their audiences. Essentially for self-promotion, as networking and promotion of their brand are key. After all, social media enables entrepreneurs to reach people worldwide and connect them with their brand (Brydges & Sjöholm, 2018; Deckers & Lacy, 2018; Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2017). To achieve this, the musicians create fitting self-narratives by reviewing what, what not, where and how to share this.

Image, sound and language are important assets in doing so. In addition to authenticity, sharing positive content is important, just like the need to be perceived as more than just one thing; not just a musician, but also an artist, creator, entrepreneur, innovator, and so on. Sometimes, the musicians create multiple pages to structure and address all sides of their identity (Van Dijck, 2013; Downing, 2005; Soreide, 2006), which emphasized the multi-faceted and mediatized nature of identity (Dooly, 2017; Förnas & Xinaris, 2013). Furthermore, as choices in content are made based on their narrative structure in relation to the self-identity, divisions are made between sharing private and professional lives. Choosing how to do so is therefore determined by the person and in relation to the brand, but in the end, it is part of a content strategy. The content resulting from this is constantly reviewed and adapted based on the notion of success. Just like identity, strategies are adaptable to time and change.

Besides having to deal with difficulties such as algorithms and platform changes and adapting their strategy to this, it is in fact their audiences who are mostly in control of the content and strategy. Content is created with an “imagined audience” in mind (Litt, 2012), based on insights provided by the platforms, previously posted content and direct feedback. It is important to know what audiences want to see and what makes them feel connected to the story that is being told. If there is a connection, people will stay and follow to learn more (Collard, 2012). Within this line, musicians often choose image over sound on social media, which seems unconventional as sound is at the heart of their product. However, as audiences prefer the quickness of social media, providing image instead of sound on their feed meets the audiences’ desire and increases ones’ chances to be followed online. Similarly, this image often performs better when being a personal one instead of it necessarily being music-related. The success on social media has become an indicator for the success of ones’ music, making it impossible to not be present on social media platforms. It is all about visibility and remaining digitally relevant (Collard, 2012), which on its turn pressures the musicians to put out the right quantity and quality. So, in light of online narrative the underlying thought shifts: gaining more followers. It is no longer solely about identity or artistry; it is about positioning and following. This on its turn makes it hard to maintain that authenticity, honesty and realness that so many of the musicians crave and want to portray. Nonetheless, the

results and opportunities that social media platforms offer outweigh the pressure resulting from it, the difficulties and the negative feelings towards them.

In conclusion, there is a lot to be taken into account with the creation of an online self-identity that represents the musicians' self or the self that they want to present their audience with. Both personal and professional development aspects are used for creating a self-identity for the off- and online spheres. When translated into an online self-identity, the musicians often use some version of a strategy in order to convey this to their audience. By evaluating the content presented to their audience, with help of their audience, new insights are being created, which change their strategy and also take part in shaping their self-identity one step at the time (LaPointe, 2010; Davies & Harré, 1990). Self-reflection and evaluation are necessary to find your "distinctiveness" and unique selling point in order to gain online visibility. This strongly relates to the notion of strategic differentiation (Balmer, 2012). However, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy, it needs to be an extension of the self but at the same time it needs to appeal to the online audience. The narrative identity work on social media becomes a strategic practice of developing ones' self and ones' activities in relation to ones' audiences (Horst, Järventie-Thesleff, & Perez-Latre, 2019). This ongoing continuous cycle performed as a practice of identity work is presented in table 4. The online self-representation of Dutch musicians and their narrative identity work are thus in constant motion, brand-dependent and never fixed.

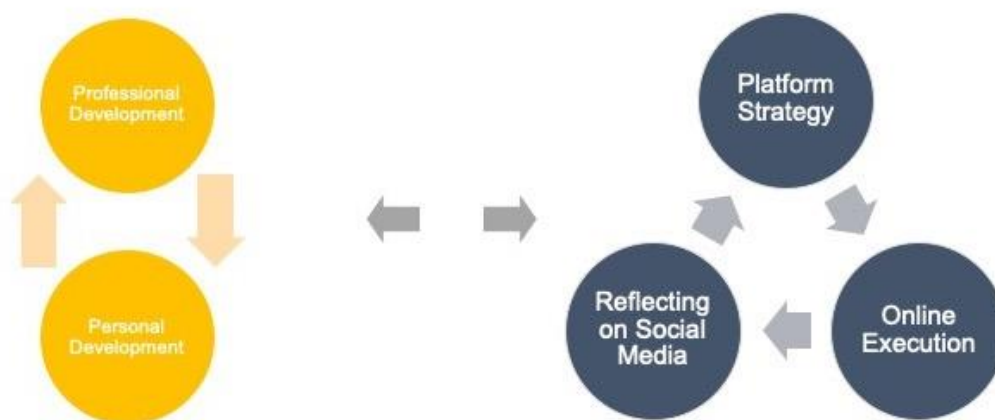


Table 4: the ongoing process of the online creation of Dutch musicians' self-identity

5.1. Limitations and future research

There are a few limitations of this research that need to be taken into account, though they can also be seen as opportunities for future research. As the sample of the study was rather small and chosen to ensure the inclusion of various Dutch musicians, over-generalizing from this small sample makes the results less accurate. However, the differences amongst musicians of various notoriety discussed in the results section are noticeable and could be studied more in depth. In fact, as this study remained quite general and is meant to serve as a foundation for future research, many of the results could be investigated in greater depth. For example, by selecting a bigger sample of people within one specific age category, based gender, by selecting one genre of music or one instrument. In particular it could be interesting to investigate the actual worth of social media when it comes to creating an online identity, as this has proved to be essential for present-day musicians. What is the actual effect of algorithms and how do they change online identities and strategies? Does social media define us?

Also, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the interviews could not be conducted in person. It is possible this effected the conversation, concentration, depth, flow, interaction, even though necessary precautions were taken to avoid this. On the other hand, the pandemic could be seen as an opportunity as the musicians had more time to reflect on their selves and their online images as most work was on hold. Going more in depth on their online self-identity post lockdown could therefore be of great interest.

Lastly, as the research only took the musicians' perspective on their online self-identities into account, it is interesting to find out how their audiences experience their content. Different perspectives can provide different outcomes, which are worth investigating in order to create the full picture to both serve the academic field and help Dutch musicians to better understand and create their online self-identities.

Overall, the musicians can develop their sense of selves, their narratives and their strategies in a continuous dialogue with their audience, and make the process of creative-entrepreneurial development emergent, dialogical and facilitated through social media. In sum, this highlights the immense opportunities of social media for musicians and other creative entrepreneurs today.

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Appendix A: Interview topic list in English

Intro

First of all, thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with me. This interview will serve as data for a study about the online aspirations of Dutch musicians. The questions I would like to talk about deal with your individual identity and on how that identity has unfolded over time.

During this interview, I will ask you to reflect upon yourself. This often involves making personal judgments that will touch on various professional and related personal topics. Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. I would like the interviews to be tape-recorded, as this simply provides for accurately keeping track of information. Subsequently the tape will be destroyed. Do you agree with audio-taping this interview?

Your participation in this study is also very important. However, if during the interview you wish to no longer participate, you can do this without any prejudice. Feel free to ask me questions at any time before, during or after the interview concerning this study. Lastly, I would like to ask you if you give me permission to use your real name or if you would like me to use a pseudonym?

Are you ready to start?

Background

Could you describe yourself:

- What is your age, gender, etc.
- Describe your work as a musician:
 - What do you do?
 - How long you have been active within the music field?
- How would you describe your music?

Social media

- Which social media platform(s) are you on?
 - Why those?
 - Do you have a target audience?
 - How do you think your target audience relates to the social media platforms you are using?
- How active are you in maintaining your channel(s)?
- What is the importance of using social media for you?
- Do you maintain multiple channels on the same platform?
 - Why?
- What kind of content do you post/upload?
 - Why? Can you describe that a bit?
 - What would you like others to see?

- (How do you think this relates to your profession?)
- Do you think that social media has become a necessary asset?
 - How so?

Identity

- Do you consider yourself more of a(n) musician/artist/entrepreneur/innovator/maker other?
- As what kind of ... do you see yourself?
- How do you think you are influenced by other musicians?
- How do you experience being a musician?
- How do you think this is reflected in the online image you wish to present to your audience?
- Is there more than one identity you (have to) show?
- Why do you think this is the case/is not the case?
 - Would you say this depends on work? Can you describe that a bit?
 - Would you say this depends on the people in your life? Can you describe that a bit?
 - Would you say this depends on specific life-events? Can you describe that a bit?
- How do you feel about this?

Identity over time

- Would you say your identity has changed throughout the years?
 - How has your identity changed?
 - Why would you say your identity has changed?
- Were you aware of this (possible) shift?
 - How did you notice this change?
 - How did the change make you feel?
 - Why do you think you were (not) aware of this change?
- How have these changes influenced the way you see yourself?

Identity work

- How have these changes influenced the way you represent yourself?
- Are there other influences that have been important in this?
- How has social media influenced the way you represent yourself?
- Would you say you have an online strategy you work by?
 - Has this strategy changed with you throughout the years?
 - Are there specific tools you use?
- How do you feel about the way you present yourself online?
 - Open your Instagram!

- What would you say are the most important skills in representing oneself online?
- Does it make you feel good to present yourself online?
- And to receive feedback from others?
- What do you think would happen if you stopped being online?
- What would happen if you would stop connecting/communicating to your followers?

Narrative

- What stories do you portray?
 - How big a part would you say sound plays in this?
 - How big a part would you say image plays in this?
 - How big a part would you say language plays in this?
- Is there a specific goal you work towards with your stories?
- How do you see yourself reaching that goal?
- Are there stories you do not display online?
 - Why is this?
- How successful would you say your online representations are?
 - What about failures?
 - Learning moments?
- How do you think this has influenced your stories?
- Do you think your online and offline stories are in sync?
 - Why (not)?

Lastly

- What would you ultimately like to achieve as a musician?
- What would you still have to do in order to get there?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me, I really appreciate it.

Appendix II: Interview topic list in Dutch

Intro

Allereerst heel erg bedankt dat je de tijd hebt genomen om dit interview met mij te doen. Dit interview zal dienen als data voor onderzoek naar de online ambities van Nederlandse muzikanten. De onderwerpen waar ik het over wil hebben gaan over jouw individuele identiteit en over hoe die identiteit zich in de loop van de tijd heeft ontwikkeld.

Tijdens dit interview zal ik je vragen na te denken over jezelf. Dit houdt in dat ik je vraag om persoonlijke beoordelingen te maken die betrekking hebben op verschillende professionele en gerelateerde persoonlijke onderwerpen. Je deelname aan dit onderzoek is strikt vertrouwelijk. De interviews worden het liefste opgenomen, omdat dit eenvoudigweg zorgt dat ik de informatie nauwkeurig kan bijhouden. Na het verwerken van de data zal de tape worden vernietigd. Ga je akkoord met het opnemen van ons gesprek?

Je deelname aan dit onderzoek is ook erg belangrijk. Als je tijdens het interview echter besluit niet langer te willen deelnemen, kunt je dit doen zonder enig vooroordeel. Voel je vrij om me op ieder moment vragen te stellen met betrekking tot de vragen of deze studie. Dan wil ik je nog vragen of je akkoord geeft op het gebruiken van je echte naam of dat je liever een pseudoniem gebruikt ziet worden?

Ben je klaar om te beginnen?

Interview

Achtergrond

Zou je jezelf kunnen beschrijven:

- Wat is je leeftijd, geslacht, enz.
- Beschrijf je werk als muzikant:
 - Wat doe/bespeel je?
 - Hoe lang ben je al actief in het muziekveld?
- Hoe zou je jouw muziek omschrijven?

Sociale media

- Op welk social media platform(en) zit je?
 - Waarom juist deze?
 - Heb je een bepaalde doelgroep die je target?
 - Hoe verhouden deze zich tot de social media platform(en) die je gebruikt?
- Hoe actief ben je in het onderhouden van je kanaal/kanalen?
- Wat is het belang van het gebruik van sociale media voor jou?
- Onderhoud je ook meerdere kanalen op hetzelfde platform?
 - Waarom?

- Wat voor soort inhoud post/upload je?
 - Waarom? Kun je dat een beetje beschrijven?
 - Wat wil je dat anderen zien?
- (Hoe denk je dat dit verband houdt met je beroep?)
- Denk je dat social media een noodzaak is geworden?
 - Waarom denk je dit (niet)?

Identiteit

- Beschouw je jezelf meer als een muzikant / artiest / ondernemer / innovator / maker anders?
- Als wat voor ... zie je jezelf?
- Hoe denk je dat je wordt beïnvloed door andere muzikanten?
- Hoe ervaar je het om muzikant zijn?
- Hoe denk je dat dit wordt weerspiegeld in het online beeld dat je aan je publiek wilt presenteren?
- Is er meer dan één identiteit die je laat zien (moet laten zien)?
- Waarom denk je dat dit het geval is / niet het geval is?
 - Zou je zeggen dat dit van je werk afhangt? Kun je dat uitleggen?
 - Zou je zeggen dat dit afhangt van de mensen in je leven? Kun je dat uitleggen?
- Hoe voel jij je hierbij?

Identiteit door de tijd heen

- Zou je zeggen dat je identiteit door de jaren heen is veranderd?
 - Hoe is je identiteit veranderd?
 - Waarom zou je zeggen dat je identiteit is veranderd?
- Was je je bewust van deze (mogelijke) verschuiving?
 - Hoe heb je deze verandering opgemerkt?
 - Hoe voelde je je door de verandering?
 - Waarom denk je dat je (niet) op de hoogte was van deze verandering?
- Hoe hebben deze veranderingen de manier beïnvloed waarop je jezelf ziet?

Identiteitswerk

- Hoe hebben deze veranderingen invloed gehad op de manier waarop je jezelf representeerd?
- Zijn er andere invloeden die hierin belangrijk zijn geweest?
- Hoe heeft sociale media de manier waarop jij jezelf representeerd beïnvloed?
- Zou je zeggen dat je een online strategie hebt waarmee je werkt?
 - Is deze strategie door de jaren heen met je mee veranderd?
 - Zijn er specifieke tools die je gebruikt?

- Wat vindt je van de manier waarop jij je online presenteert?
 - Open je profiel!
- Wat zijn volgens jou de belangrijkste vaardigheden om jezelf online te presenteren?
- Voelt het goed om jezelf online te presenteren?
- En om feedback van anderen te ontvangen?
- Wat denk je dat er zou gebeuren als je stopte met “online zijn”?
- Wat zou er gebeuren als je zou stoppen met het communiceren met je volgers?

Narratief

- Welke verhalen beeld je af?
 - Hoe groot is volgens jou de rol die geluid hierin speelt?
 - Hoe groot is volgens jou de rol die beeld hierin speelt?
 - Hoe groot is volgens jou de rol die taal hierin speelt?
- Is er een specifiek doel waar je naartoe werkt met je verhalen?
- Hoe zie je jezelf dat doel bereiken?
- Zijn er verhalen die je niet online toont?
 - Waarom is dit?
- Hoe succesvol zou je zeggen dat je online verhalen zijn?
 - Hoe zit het met mislukkingen?
 - Leermomenten?
- Hoe denk je dat dit je verhalen heeft beïnvloed?
- Denk je dat je online en offline verhalen in sync zijn?
 - Waarom (niet)?

Tot slot

- Wat zou je uiteindelijk als muzikant willen bereiken?
- Wat zou je nog moeten doen om daar te komen?

Super bedankt dat je de tijd hebt genomen om dit interview met me te doen, ik waardeer het echt enorm.

Appendix III: Consent form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Romy de Wijs

Admiraal de Ruyterweg 34D, 3031 AD Rotterdam

romydewijs@live.nl

+31624147937

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about the online identity of Dutch musicians. The purpose of the study is to understand the ambitions behind creating their online profile(s).

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms:

- The questions in the interview will be related to your identity as a musician and social media
- Your participation in the experiment will be related to comparing the visions of a variety of Dutch musicians
- My observations will focus on your intentions and ambitions, not your actual online profiles
- Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a tape recorder for the interview.
- You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information [such as your photo] not in the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by using a pseudonym and general identification such as only mentioning age and gender.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take up 60-90 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish — Dr. Sven-Ove Horst, assistant professor at the Department of Media and Communication, at horst@eshcc.eur.nl.

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name	Signature	Date
------	-----------	------

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix IV: Coding tree elaborate

First order observations / Open coding	Second order themes / Axial coding	Third order themes / Selective coding	Forth order themes / Selective coding
Introducing themselves	Introducing themselves	Introduction	Introduction
Describing music	Describing music		
Another job besides being a musician Became a teacher to be financially independent and make music I love Making sure to do other projects related to music	Additional jobs		
Autonomy is key for me I feel I'm an artist I see myself as composer I see myself as connector I see myself as musician I see myself as musician who collaborates with others I see myself as performer I see myself as pop-cover singer I see myself as sound artist I see myself as artist I see myself as entertainer I see myself as innovator I'm a brand I'm an entrepreneur I'm not one genre I'm not really professional My identity is mostly my work Self-identity	Self-identity	Personal development	Identity development
Accepting myself made me more comfortable in showing who I am online Changes happen because steps taken seem like logical next steps Dealing with criticism and accepting mistakes Finding yourself Gaining more confidence through the years Getting older and wiser Growing as a person Learning to be greatfull for what you have Learning to take a chance Learning what you don't want in life is also very valuable Necessity to keep improving and innovating Reflecting a lot on my life Translating new insights to other aspects of life	Personal growth		

<p>I feel happy and proud looking back at my development I never wanted to make music to become famous It's easier to see and understand growth when looking back at it It's fun to look back at former identities Looking back at own my development, I realise it was self-acceptance My music is the indication for my identity changes through the years</p>	<p>Looking back at development</p>		
<p>Always stay inspired and have financial independence to do what I love Be super successful Being able to attract people to performances of my own music Creating a loyal fanbase that's interested in all my projects Getting the best of myself so I can create the best things Having my own studio I would want to collaborate with a designer or make music for shows Playing at a specific American venue Playing at a well-known Dutch venue Reaching even more people so I can make them happy Win the Eurovision Song Contest</p>	<p>Ultimate goal</p>		
<p>Artistry and entrepreneurship make success As a musician you need to be entrepreneur Constantly thinking of ways to create new things Entrepreneur for good causes Entrepreneur for self-promotion Not strong yet in entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Entrepreneurship</p>		<p>Professional development</p>
<p>Always been busy writing music Awareness of changes in identity Becoming famous Becoming more aware of representation towards audience Changes through environment and experiences Experimenting to improve music Finding your sound Gaining more confidence as a musician Learning and evolving, not changing Making different music Meeting the right people My message did not change through the years Not looking to innovate myself Noticing own development as an artist on social media Started off career with performing lots</p>	<p>Developing as a musician</p>		

<p>Starting off with collaborations Still figuring out where I want to go with my music career Supporting other musicians through career Wanting to be more than only a musician</p>			
<p>Being a musician is my purpose Being a musician is part of who I am Greatfull to be a musician I enjoy being a musician I love being a musician It can be hard because I always want to put out something perfect It makes me feel connected with my audience It's comfortable and relaxed It's not a status, it's part of my DNA It's stressful to be a musician</p>	<p>Feelings towards being a musician</p>		
<p>Balance between passion and making money Influenced by other music, but you don't want to make the same Invest to become more successful Making money via social media Need to stand out Paying people their worth Performing is easier than selling your product one on one Quality is expected Visibility</p>	<p>Difficulties of being a musician</p>		
<p>Giving advice to other musicians about being online I try to inspire others I try to look at other artists less to keep myself purer Inspiration from other art disciplines Inspiration from political messages in music Inspiration from surroundings Inspired by other music and musicians</p>	<p>Inspiration</p>		
<p>All sides of my identity are shown in my music and instrument All the things I make derive from the same concept Diversity and experimenting is important in my music I don't want to make music to listen to just for fun I make songs, shape them, rather than improvisation I tried making different music, but it wasn't me I want my music to be the power behind everything I want my music to have a message</p>	<p>Thoughts on personal music</p>		

<p>I want to do projects that I truly support</p> <p>I write songs about politicians</p> <p>If I write lyrics, I need to have a connection with it</p> <p>Music to me is an expression, it's not commercial</p> <p>My goal is now to make something new</p> <p>My music is an extension of myself to the outside world</p> <p>Positive feelings towards doing covers</p> <p>Working from craftsmanship</p> <p>You should use technology and innovation only if it improves the music</p>			
<p>Social media platforms</p> <p>A way of controlling fame</p> <p>Because it makes me happy</p> <p>Becoming famous without label</p> <p>Booking opportunities</p> <p>Communication purposes</p> <p>Creating a fanbase</p> <p>Creating visibility</p> <p>For promotion purposes</p> <p>Low threshold for fans to follow you</p> <p>Maintaining a professional account</p> <p>Making other people happy</p> <p>Networking and reaching people (worldwide)</p> <p>Out of necessity</p> <p>Product placing</p> <p>Sharing announcements</p> <p>Sharing my personal life</p> <p>Staying up to date on latest music developments</p>	<p>Social media platforms</p> <p>Reasons for using social media</p>	<p>Social media strategy</p>	<p>Online identity work</p>
<p>A lot of musicians and producers follow me</p> <p>Accepting that people want to see you a certain way</p> <p>I follow the followers of artists I love to gain more followers</p> <p>In my genre, you can't make or break things with social media</p> <p>Instagram is the social media platform most used</p> <p>Instagram is used for fun</p> <p>Learning what works for your audience online with content</p> <p>My audience is a mirror of society</p> <p>Older people are on Facebook because it's more user friendly</p>	<p>Audience insights</p>		

<p>On Instagram people come for the pictures and quickness of it all People liking you for you, not what you do People not knowing you from your profession but from TV People want to be triggered through social media People want to see me as the interpreter of existing music People want to see me in the pictures I post People want to see me perform People want to see the happy side of me You can gain more followers online through aesthetics Young people are easier to reach via Instagram Young people are more active on social media Young people don't see the quality of sound as that important Youth is on Snapchat and Tiktok</p>			
<p>As a woman you can have a lot of power As an artist you need to spread light Everything I do is an enlargement of my message I want people to feel that they matter I want to share the joy I get from making music with people Positive body image Sharing love Sharing my energy The power of a message can be enough Wanting to add something to the world with music</p>	<p>Online mission</p>		
<p>An online strategy doesn't feel authentic to me Content plan Creating a certain aesthetic Creating more engagement Doing online what feels good to me Finding the right content for you I decide all the content myself It's important to post something new Know your target audience Linking through content between social media platforms Music remains the basis of my online profile Online skills</p>	<p>Online strategy</p>		

<p>Online strategy depending on work</p> <p>Online tools</p> <p>Planning when to post</p> <p>Someone does my social media for me</p> <p>Still trying out different strategies to see what works</p> <p>Target audience</p> <p>Working without online strategy</p>			
<p>Audience changes with platforms</p> <p>Deleting online posts that are not representative anymore</p> <p>Learning how to present yourself online</p> <p>Online strategy changes with you</p> <p>Posting schedule has changed</p> <p>When performing a lot, I forgot about my online message</p>	<p>Online strategy through the years</p>		
<p>Because of Corona everything moves to digital</p> <p>Because of Corona pandemic, everyone struggles to survive financially</p> <p>Because of Corona, there is now time for other projects</p> <p>Corona changes how people look at social media</p> <p>Corona makes it clear that something in the performance scene needs to change</p> <p>Having to find new ways to earn money during Corona</p> <p>Making music to lift people up during these times</p> <p>Need to maintain following during these times</p> <p>Online content changes because of the pandemic</p> <p>Promoting each other (artists) during Corona</p> <p>Remaining positive in these times for people</p>	<p>Short term strategy changes (Corona)</p>		
<p>Active on social media</p> <p>Activity depends on the kind and amount of work</p> <p>Activity on social media depends on mood</p> <p>Being active online creates more response</p> <p>More active on personal page than professional ones</p> <p>Not active on Facebook</p> <p>Not that active in maintaining my channels</p> <p>Should be more active on social media</p> <p>Social media activity comes and goes</p> <p>Using social media daily</p> <p>Very active on social media</p>	<p>Social media activity</p>		

<p>I hope I'm an innovator I want people to see my energy and passion</p> <p>I want people to see that I'm hardworking I want people to see that what they want to see I want people to see they can be themselves I want people to understand what I'm doing</p> <p>I want to be seen as a brand I want to be seen as a connector</p> <p>I want to be seen as a creator I want to be seen as a multidisciplinary artist</p> <p>I want to be seen as a virtuoso I want to be seen as humble I want to be seen as interesting</p> <p>I want to be seen as the person I am I want to be seen as an artist for everyone</p> <p>I want to inspire I want to share how I feel I want to show all aspects of me I want to show that I'm still developing I want to stand in the middle of both the new and older generation</p>	<p>Thoughts behind their online image</p>		
<p>Not sharing political preferences Not sharing private life Online showing content that's interesting to the public</p> <p>Only sharing the good things online Putting out the best version of you Selecting specific platforms for certain content What you see online, you should be able to recognize in real life</p> <p>You can't share every minute</p>	<p>Selecting content</p>		
<p>Image is most important, it's about the online aesthetics Image is very important; you don't post without image</p> <p>Images make people curious Instagram is about aesthetics Photos generate more likes than anything else Videos are just as important as the music</p>	<p>Imagery on social media</p>		
<p>Image is more important than sound on social media</p>	<p>Sound on social media</p>		

<p>Sound is as important as image on social media</p> <p>Sound is imperfect on social media</p> <p>Sound on social media is everything</p> <p>Sound on social media is important but don't want to give away too much</p> <p>Sound on social media is more important than imaging</p>			
<p>Caption with posts need to emphasize the image</p> <p>Carefull about the tone of language with posts</p> <p>Language is more important on Facebook than it is on Instagram</p> <p>Language is not the main focus</p> <p>Not posting too long of a caption</p> <p>Online language is not that personal</p> <p>Online language is very important</p> <p>The need to find a balance in the language of posting</p> <p>Writing captions to make it more personal</p> <p>Writing in English on social media so more people can understand</p> <p>Writing what comes to mind with posts</p> <p>Your caption influences if someone is going to listen to your video</p>	<p>Language on social media</p>		
<p>I really like social media</p> <p>In general, I think Instagram is very positive</p> <p>It feels good to present myself online</p> <p>Not knowing precisely what will work makes social media fun</p>	<p>Positive feelings towards social media</p>		
<p>Disliking social media, but using it out of necessity</p> <p>Disliking Twitter for negativity</p> <p>Everyone whines on social media</p> <p>No uniqueness on social media anymore</p> <p>Social media can be destructive of self-confidence</p> <p>Social media has a big impact on life</p> <p>Social media is about how it looks, not the music</p> <p>Social media is basically a sales platform</p> <p>Social media is fake</p> <p>Social media is momentary</p> <p>Social media is unhealthy</p> <p>Social media will use your data to make money</p>	<p>Negative feelings towards social media</p>	<p>Reflecting on social media</p>	
<p>Algorithms</p> <p>Audience is in control of your success</p> <p>Can't control your audience</p>	<p>Difficulties of social media</p>		

<p>Describing my identity is some kind of dilemma</p> <p>Expectations are high</p> <p>Finding the right strategy</p> <p>Giving the audience what it wants</p> <p>Maintaining professional page is hard</p> <p>Multiple online accounts</p> <p>Necessity to be online</p> <p>Not giving away too much online</p> <p>People want more than just music</p> <p>Pictures have more effect than videos do</p> <p>Pressure to put out content</p> <p>Quantity needs to be just right</p> <p>Social media is distracting</p> <p>Social media is harder for older musicians</p> <p>Takes up too much time</p> <p>You get to know and be influenced by more artists through social media</p>			
<p>Anyone can become famous through social media these days</p> <p>Entire music industry changed</p> <p>Everyone tries to say something online</p> <p>Feeling the need to show all interests online</p> <p>I'm addicted to social media</p> <p>Influences the way you see yourself</p> <p>It's not about what you do anymore, it's about who you are</p> <p>Less personal contact with audience</p> <p>Makes the world smaller</p> <p>People settling for online content as concerts</p> <p>Safe distance between artist and audience</p> <p>Sharing information asked and unasked</p> <p>Social media creates a fear of missing out</p> <p>Social media creates high standards</p> <p>Social media makes for easy access online</p> <p>The pressure is always on</p> <p>We became less real</p> <p>We're living in a time of creating hypes</p> <p>You need to stand out</p>	<p>Results of social media</p>		
<p>Dependent on a manager or the music industry without social media</p>	<p>Without social media</p>		

<p>Going back to the old ways of promotion Harder to be a musician without social media No social media is fine as long as I still get to make music</p> <p>No visibility without social media People would notice me not being on social media Quitting social media would bring me peace Quitting social media would have a lot of impact</p> <p>We could live without social media</p>			
<p>Balance between posting pictures and videos</p> <p>Balance in content: music and life</p> <p>Changing out banners on Facebook Content on personal Facebook is more personal Content wise I like to respond to current events I sometimes post pictures of the same performance I use pictures made when I was a model for social media More thought into posting a photo than story because of content duration</p> <p>My content is about my music On Instagram I post more private and personal things</p> <p>On Instagram stories I post live videos</p> <p>On Instagram stories I post my daily life On my personal page I just post whatever keeps me busy and happy</p> <p>Pictures of myself</p> <p>Posting content of me performing Posting work related music on professional, musical side projects on personal The images online represent my style and music</p>	<p>Social media content</p>	<p>Online execution</p>	
<p>I give people a very complete image of what I do</p> <p>I only post things I support online I sometimes use my artist name and sometimes my own It's important to do things that make me happy It's important to maintain own social channels for credibility It's very important to be authentic on social media My online identity changes with me and the work I make My online image hasn't changed throughout the years</p> <p>My online profile represents my music</p>	<p>Creating online identity</p>		

<p>My social media is not always picture perfect</p> <p>Online identity is clear The visuals need to match the content/music You need to have your identity clear before presenting online</p> <p>You need to maintain your passion</p>			
<p>Different content on the different accounts Fulfilling multiple identities on social media is hard</p> <p>Having multiple online pages Having multiple online pages, not multiple identities</p> <p>Not showing multiple identities online</p> <p>Pressure to show more than one identity There are different sides to my identity, not multiple identities</p>	Multiple online identities		
<p>Communicating happens mostly offline</p> <p>Communicating is important for fanbase Communicating through posts, not personal messages Communicating with audience a lot online</p> <p>Enjoying communicating with audience</p> <p>Enjoying getting feedback from people</p> <p>Feedback mostly offline Getting feedback asked and unasked from audience Importance of communicating for musicians amongst themselves Responding to people myself is important</p> <p>Seeing feedback as a compliment</p> <p>Selective responding</p>	Communication with audience		
<p>I sometimes look at my own profile to see what others see</p> <p>I think my social media shows the image of what I'm currently doing</p> <p>Looking at Instagram, I get nervous because I feel the need to post</p> <p>Looking at my Instagram, I see a feed full of memories</p> <p>Looking at my likes, I see proof that social media is about looks, not content</p> <p>My social media is an extension of myself to the outside world</p> <p>Positive feelings towards own Instagram When I look at my profile, I see my message shining through</p>	Personal online execution		
<p>As long as I can continue to do what I love, I'm successful</p> <p>Currently evaluating online success</p> <p>My own stories are not that successful</p>	Success		

My stories are for the most part successful			
My stories are pretty successful			
My stories are successful			
Stories are more successful with my band			
Striving for success is important to me			
The success is connecting the physical to sound			
You need money to be successful			