

**Beyond cancel culture :  
Digital vigilantism toward YouTube shamelebrity Trisha  
Paytas**

Student Name: Dianne Marie Petrov  
Student Number: 618323

Supervisor: Dr. Simone Driessen

Master Media Studies - Media & Creative Industries  
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication  
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis  
*June 2022*

BEYOND CANCEL CULTURE : DIGITAL VIGILANTISM TOWARD YOUTUBER  
SHAMELEBRITY TRISHA PAYTAS

**ABSTRACT**

This Master's thesis offers an insight of the negotiations of drama and commentary channels on YouTube in relation to two scandals of long-time YouTuber Trisha Paytas. It combines celebrity studies and surveillance studies to gain a deeper understanding of how YouTubers use modes of digital vigilantism to re-establish order after a scandal has occurred. More specifically, this research examines how Trisha Paytas uses shamelebrity practices to gain notoriety and how the drama and commentary community react towards this type behavior. It shows that maintaining order online is a dynamic and interactive process that revolves around discussions and investigations in order to expose and police bad behavior within the YouTube community. A comparative thematic analysis was conducting on two of the last scandals which occurred. The responses differed depending of the severity of the nature of the scandal as well as shared similarities.

**KEYWORDS:** *Cancel Culture, Digital Vigilantism, YouTube, Shamelebrity, Trisha Paytas*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to  
make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

I would like to thank everyone who made this thesis possible and supported this new path I have embarked on. Changing my career path was extremely daunting and quitting one master program and starting an entirely new one was a scary change to make, but one which has altered my life forever.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Simone Driessen, for guiding me through this process. To say, I was utterly excited to have you as my supervisor would be an absolute understatement. It has been an absolute pleasure having you guide me through this process. I want to thank you for your guidance and feedback, and most importantly your kind and encouraging words. I learned a lot from you as well as your academic work and found a lot of inspiration for my thesis thanks to you.

I would like to also thank my family, partner and friends for all the support you have provided me during this time. Thank you guys for caring for me, and to my little brother for sending me funny meme and cute animal videos to keep my spirits up when I felt lost at times. To my partner, Pol, who has supported my academic journey for the last five years. Thank you for being so extremely caring and supportive. And lastly, thanking my fellow students of the Media & Creative Industries program for having lovely wine evening to decompress from this stressful period we collectively found ourselves to be in.

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
(Micro)celebrity in the age of cancel culture .....	1
Canceling a YouTube shamelebrity .....	2
Emergent vigilantism on YouTube .....	4
<b>2. Theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Microcelebrity .....	8
Shamelebrity .....	9
Attention economy .....	10
Digital vigilantism.....	13
Cancel culture .....	14
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Data collection.....	19
Data analysis .....	20
Reliability & validity.....	22
<b>4. Results.....</b>	<b>23</b>
DID scandal.....	23
Teacher scandal .....	33
Discussion .....	38
<b>5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>44</b>
Limitations .....	45
Future research .....	45
<b>References.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>56</b>



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. (Micro)celebrities in the age of cancel culture

In recent years, cancel culture has become one of the most loaded concepts in contemporary culture (Ng, 2022). Cancellations, also described as cancel actions or cancel practices (Ng, 2022), often play out on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. In some cases, cancel practices will explicitly use the term “cancelled” (e.g. Elleniscancelled), or include social media posts which refer to in a more implicit manner (e.g. #TaylorSwiftisoverparty) (Ng, 2022). Other forms of cancel practices involve the withdrawal of one’s support from the cancel target by for example unfollowing them from social media, or no longer purchasing the brands being promoted by the targets (Ng, 2022). Cancel practices can also cause what Ng (2022) highlights as “literal cancelling” (p. 5) which refers to the idea of the cancel target facing real consequences such as being fired. Thus, this new “digital discursive accountability praxis” habitually occurs because the cancel target’s values, actions, or speech has been deemed so offensive that individuals or corporations no longer wish to grace him or her with their presence, time, and money (Clark, 2020, p. 88).

However, not all cancel practices end in success. This is in part because cancel practices within popular culture are not monolithic in their motivations, characteristics or trajectories (Ng, 2022). Roseanne Barr was literally and thus successfully cancelled (i.e. she was fired) from her revival sitcom *Roseanne* after racist tweets were exposed on Twitter. On the other hand, Ellen Degeneres, a popular television host, was unsuccessfully cancelled after being exposed for allegedly fostering a toxic work environment. Degeneres only faced temporary backlash, however, still continues to be the host for her show *Ellen* (Quinn, 2021). These examples highlight both ends of the spectrum with some suffering the full consequences, while others only suffering temporary losses often losing a small number of supporters. Therefore, these examples also show how being cancelled – as a designation is commonly reserved for celebrities, public figures and otherwise out-of-reach figures (Clark, 2020).

Cancel culture can be understood as a collective behavior by a group of people who aim to impose “consequences for unacceptable behavior” (Henderson, 2020, p. 37). Furthermore, it is important to note that cancelling a person is a socially mediated phenomenon with origins in the (queer) communities of color (Clark, 2020). The increasing popularity of cancel culture within contemporary society has triggered various critical discussions regarding social norms (Bouvier, 2020). And nowhere is this more prevalent than

in celebrity culture. This might be due to the fact that celebrity culture represents a central site for reflecting and negotiating societal morality and values which evolve over time in response to changing cultural and political climates (Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020). The term itself has gained a lot of traction within online communities as it enables these communities to publicly shame those who transgress social norms. As such, the adherence that cancel culture provides heavily contrasts with the freedom, the limited censorship and low degree of regulation that the Internet affords. The 2018 Logan Paul scandal illustrates this point as he was not held accountable by YouTube after it had come to light that he had included a dead man hanging from a tree in one of his vlogs (Hills, 2018). As such, online communities felt compelled to take matters into their own hands by cancelling him themselves with the aim of having him deplatformed for breaking the social norms on YouTube.

Cancel culture then seems to morph into a type of user-generated censorship machine where online communities adopt a culture of decentralized accountability by targeting those who engage in socially unacceptable behavior. And with the rapid evolution of social media, online culture is becoming more substantial which is producing a perversity towards shaming transgressive people online which essentially works as a catalyst of social norms at an amplified level (Bromwich, 2020). This makes cancel practices seemingly easier to execute and more contagious which could be the result of the amplification of circulation of content via social media which facilitates the immediate dissemination of information (Ng, 2020).

### **1.2. Canceling a YouTube shamebrity**

YouTubers are at the center of online celebrities and Trisha Paytas exemplifies a prime example of performances of the self as microcelebrity located in a culture of universal promotion (Wernick, 1992). This type of celebrity finds fame online through images, statuses and videos posted on one or more social media platforms. Therefore, just as traditional celebrities, microcelebrities often become cancel targets (Clark, 2020). In the case of microcelebrities, it is often their online content, present or past, which is scrutinized and if deemed problematic is made visible by becoming part of the public record (Ng, 2020). Moreover, becoming prominent cancel targets comes as no surprise since celebrities have long been associated with scandalous behavior with the media often taking interest in publicly exposing their transgressions of society's norms and dominant morality (Lull & Hinerman, 1997).

Trisha Paytas is an American YouTuber and has become a household name on the

platform over the past decade with presently 5 million subscribers on her main channel *blndsundoll4mj*. Therefore, she can be understood as a microcelebrity by using the Internet to achieve fame and money, however, how she presents her online persona appears to be quite unique to that of other popular YouTubers. Popular notions of self-presentation in digital culture often consist of a barrage of happy and beautiful people who detail their fabulous acquisitions and activities (Berryman & Kavka, 2018). Therefore, for some microcelebrities success is often obtained by emulating the tropes and symbols of traditional celebrity culture (Marwick, 2015). They create a type of lifestyle envy (Berryman & Kavka, 2018) because they are conventionally good looking people (Marwick, 2015) who lead a life style most people could only dream of. However, others have found success by disrupting this predominately positive attention economy by engaging with and displaying negative affect (Berryman & Kayka, 2018). Trisha Paytas disrupts the positive economy by partaking in vlogging practices which by and large provoke a range of negative emotions in audience members. Her vlogs are predominately edgy, inflammatory, sexual and controversial which in turn generates negative attention from viewers. As such, she has gained fame not by presenting a ‘happy self’, instead she has done so by deliberately constructing her persona as a messy and controversial vlogger. Thus, Paytas makes for an interesting research subject because she has gained notoriety for being a controversial online celebrity, more specifically Paytas can be understood as a shamelebrity (Abidin, 2016).

Interestingly, there seems to have been an intensification of Paytas’s shamelebrity practices in recent years as she went from posting vlogs such as, “I am a chicken nugget” in which she explained that she had woken up feeling like a chicken nugget to “I AM TRANSGENDER (FEMALE TO MALE)” which was a form of coming out video in which she claimed to be transgender. These examples illustrate that some of her vlogs are edgy, but not necessarily harmful, while the latter shows how she deliberately constructs a controversy to provoke negatively charged public reactions (Abidin, 2016). The transgender scandal sparked a lot of moral outrage because she seemed to have misled her viewers into thinking it was a coming out when in fact she was merely discussing her gender struggles. The chicken nugget scandal appeared to receive less backlash as it was not perceived as deeply offensive. Furthermore, Paytas has not gone through with any sex reassignment surgery to date. Importantly, Paytas was not cancelled by YouTube even though she had directly violated the following community policy “misleading metadata or thumbnails: using the title, thumbnails, description to trick users into believing the content is something it is not” (YouTube, 2022).

While other YouTubers, such as Shane Dawson and James Charles, seem to be



unwilling targets of cancel culture, it would appear that Trisha Paytas uses an array of controversial vlogging practices as a deliberate strategy to gain more views seemingly being aware of the fact that cancel practices could follow. In a recent video, Trisha Paytas explains in a parody interview of the *Wired Autocomplete Interview* :

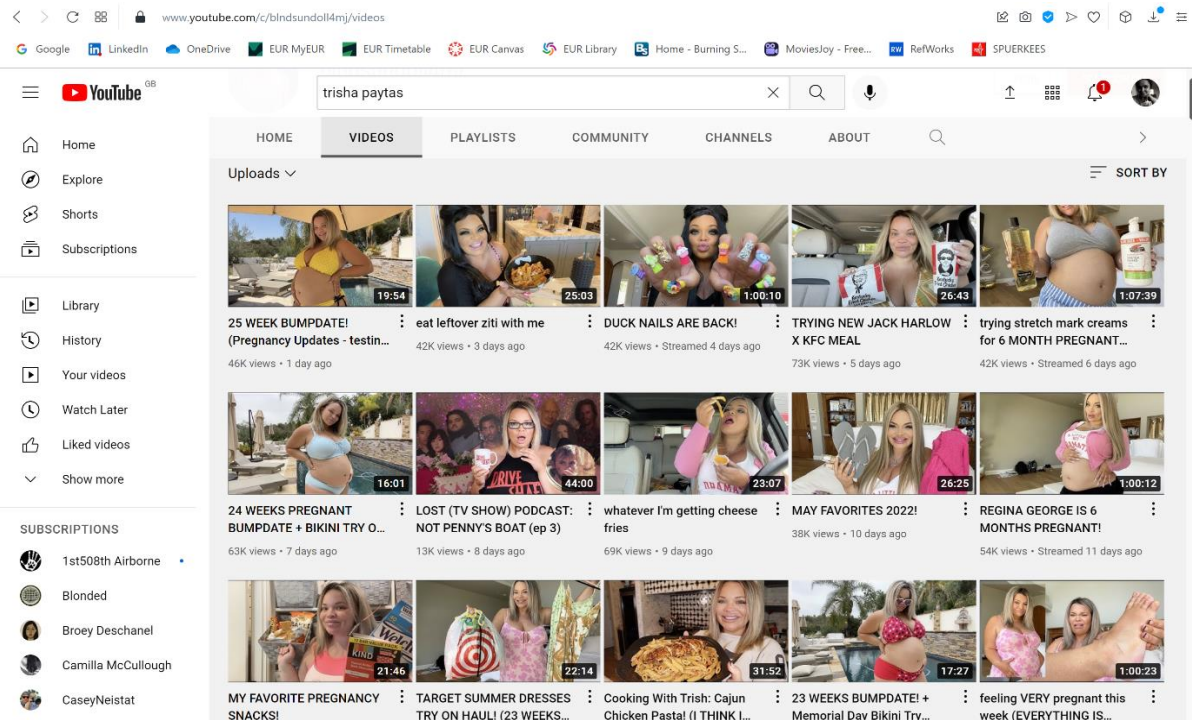
...why did Trisha Paytas get famous oh my gosh I mean there's so many reasons I *trolled my way to the top* and I'm just so lovable *people just keep forgiving me* okay why was Trisha Paytas cancelled which time um *I've gotten canceled for everything* from being open about like my gender struggles to um I don't know just stop being friends with people *people just want to cancel me* (blindsundoll4mj, 2022) [emphasis added]

Thus, Paytas stands out from her peers because for a long time she intentionally generated controversial content for her YouTube channel to garner attention. As she herself highlighted, Paytas has been involved in a several cancellations caused by her vlogs on YouTube and appears to have locked herself into cyclical shame-forming practices in order to continuously produce controversial content that will incite arousal in a feedback loop (Abidin, 2016) in hopes of maintaining her celebrity status on YouTube.

However, recently there seems to be a shift in her vlogging practices with her view count having gone down rather substantially. It appears that she has retired from the shamelebrity practices as she seems to have shifted toward a more conventional form of vlogging, more specifically family vlogging as she is expecting her first child. This new troping toward positivity can be seen as effecting the attention she receives which is directly observable in the metrics of value (e.g. view-count on her videos).

### **Figure 1**

*Screenshot of Trisha Paytas's main channel*



*Note* A lower view count (below 100'000 views on each video) demonstrating how her new positive vlogging practices are less successful than her shamebrity practices in the past

### 1.3. Emerging vigilantism on YouTube

In the age of cancel culture, Paytas seems to be under a microscope as not only audience members, but her peers seems to be more vigilant toward her vlogging practices. As such, this research centers around YouTubers who cover, engage and negotiate her wrongdoings through videos uploaded to their own channel. The practices resonate with vigilante behavior. As her shamebrity practices have intensified in the last couple of years, some YouTubers have actively been “digging for dirt” (Abidin, 2016, p. 331), past and present, to expose her long-rooted history of shamebrity practices on YouTube. As a result, there has been an intense and immediate flurry of videos, spawning discussion about a her practices which has brought her a lot of attention (albeit very negative). These videos can be understood as being a part of a more longer-term and more widespread pattern of digital vigilantism which are often led by more well-known YouTubers, who play by the rules which have been collectively established over time by the user community (Burgess et al., 2020). Therefore, the shamebrity practices of Paytas reveal the tensions between those who play by these rules and those who, according to the perceptions of these YouTubers, contribute to the breakdown of the cultural value and integrity of the platform by disregarding the norms

(Burgess et al., 2020). Therefore, these videos contribute to the negotiations of societal norms and values central to the integrity of the platform. They do so by what can be described as social media surveillance with the aim of searching and gathering data in order to discipline behavior that is thought to be violating their community rules (Fuchs & Trottier, 2015).

Thus, one could argue that because of the failure of the cancel campaigns and the intensification of her behavior on the platform, the YouTube community appeared to act as digital vigilantes closely examining Paytas's content. Digital vigilantism shares traits with cancel culture which will be explored further in the following chapter. As for a brief definition, digital vigilantism is defined as "a process where citizens are collectively offended by other citizen activity, and respond through coordinated retaliation on digital media platforms, including mobile devices and social media platforms" (Trottier, 2017, p. 55). Moreover, the notion of digital vigilantism includes responses both to criminal events as well as offences that transgress moral and normative boundaries (Trottier, 2020). In essence, YouTubers have been outraged by the vlogging practices of Paytas and one could argue this has been exacerbated by the fact that for a long time the cancel campaigns were unsuccessful. Therefore, with the cyclical nature of her shamebrity content and various failed cancellations, there has been as what could be described as an emerging vigilant YouTube community which goes beyond the practices of cancel culture. Additionally, this emergent vigilantism appears to have launched as a response toward what the community perceives as actual criminal events such as domestic abuse claims and false claims of sexual assault. The chosen transgressions and alleged crimes will be described in more detail in the results and analysis chapter of this thesis.

#### **1.4. Academic & societal relevance**

This thesis aims to contribute to the academic literature on celebrity studies and surveillance studies. It brings together theories on microcelebrity practices (Marwick, 2013) and digital vigilantism (Trottier, 2019), enhancing scholarly understandings of these innerworkings. Additionally, it contributes to the growing scope of literature on the topic of cancel culture by focusing on an understudied type of microcelebrity, namely the shamebrity (Abidin, 2016). Moreover, this research centers around cancel culture which generally is studied on the prominent social media platform Twitter often through quantitative means (e.g., Bouvier, 2021). Therefore, this thesis will also contribute to filling the research gap by analyzing cancel culture on another social media platform, namely YouTube. Moreover, it will also contribute to the literature on digital vigilantism as it uses this theory to frame the analysis of

this case study.

This research project is socially relevant because of the profound way cancel culture is disrupting, changing and even polarizing society as whole. Additionally, digital vigilantes are having a profound effect on how citizens engage with perceived wrongdoings and crime. Thus, digital vigilantism is disrupting the conventional justice seeking system due to the lack of normative guidelines (Trottier, 2020).

### **1.5. Research question**

Tracing how Trisha Paytas's shamelebrity practices triggered vigilantism on YouTube is at the heart of this research. Therefore, the aim of this research is examine how YouTubers negotiate these specific practices. This has led to the following research questions :

*How do content creators from the drama and commentary community on YouTube negotiate the controversial content by Trisha Paytas?*

## 2. Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework and previous research conducted, more specifically on cancel culture, celebrity studies and surveillance studies. A corpus of academic sources were examined and subsequently those which aid in the investigation of cancelling microcelebrities online were taken into consideration. This chapter highlights how this thesis aims to join celebrity studies and surveillance studies in order to gain a better understanding of how content creators police norms on YouTube through the lens of digital vigilantism. Both digital vigilantism and cancel culture share similar features, such as moral outrage, public shaming and online justice seeking, as will be explained later on in this chapter. In the age of cancel culture, it is becoming more common place for content creators on the social platforms to point out wrongdoings, often resulting in audience members withdrawing support by unsubscribing and leaving anger filled comments in the comment section below the videos themselves (Dodgson, 2019), hence this chapter brings together different fields of research.

### 2.1. Microcelebrity

YouTubers such as Trisha Paytas are at the center of Internet celebrities as they can be considered prime examples of performances of the private self as microcelebrity in a culture of universal promotion (Wernick, 1992). The term microcelebrity has existed for close to two decades now: Senft coined this concept in 2004 where it first appeared in her doctoral dissertation and then later in her book *Camgirls* in 2008. The term microcelebrity (Gamson, 2011; Marwick, 2013, 2015; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Senft, 2008, 2013) is used to describe a distinctive “Internet-enabled visibility” (Marwick, 2013, p. 114) which primarily garners a following online, however, is often micro in scope (Gamson, 2011) when compared to traditional celebrities.

More specifically, this type of celebrity is defined “a new style of online performance in which people employ webcams, video, audio, blogs, and social networking sites to ‘amp up’ their popularity among readers, viewers, and those to whom they are linked online” (Senft, 2008, p. 25). Marwick (2013) further developed this concept by arguing the microcelebrity carries out a particular performance designed for self-branding which includes the “presentation of oneself as a celebrity regardless of who is paying attention” (p. 114).

This conceptualization explains the model of YouTube vloggers who attempt to gain popularity and wealth by showing their audiences their daily life activities. As such,

microcelebrity is something that an individual does, rather than something the individual is (Marwick, 2015). These microcelebrities carefully construct their personalities, and in the case of YouTube vloggers, do so mainly through a collection of videos uploaded to YouTube. The objective for YouTubers such Trisha Paytas is fame and thus there is a deliberate and conscious effort that is made in order to maximize their “visibility, status and popularity” (Marwick, 2012, p. 14). Marwick (2010) defines this as an achieved microcelebrity and goes on to argue that a persona is created who shares personal information to perform intimate connections which elicits the illusion of friendship and closeness (Marwick, 2010). It is this aspect of the celebrification of the private self that constitutes a change in the “game of celebrity” (Senft, 2013, p. 350) as traditional celebrities have often refrained from showing their private selves and lives to their fans and the public. YouTube vloggers do quite the opposite as they attempt to portray an authentic private self to their followers by showing everyday mundane activities. Thus, this “star system of YouTube” (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 24) is evidently blurring the boundaries between the private and the public of celebrity culture so much so that Andreas Kitzmann (2003) argued almost two decades ago that a “context collapse of public/private divide” was predestined (p. 58). Moreover, creating attention-worthy performances of this private authentic self are the most valuable commodity in social media celebrification. With Marwick’s conception of thinking of oneself as a celebrity and treating others accordingly reveals how the production of attention is reciprocal in that success and failure and this “start system of YouTube” is directly observable by the number of followers, likes, subscribers and so on.

### ***2.2.1. Shamelebrity***

This thesis focuses on one microcelebrity, namely Trisha Paytas and this concept was discussed in depth above. However, the persona that Paytas has created is far more complex and thus needs further description. James Twitchell (1997) developed this conception in vein as he states:

The shamelebrity is not a villain or even an antihero. He, or she, is simply someone who has done something wrong, often something shameful, and is able, with the help of press agents, tabloids, publicists, fanzines, and managers, to make the act into a sequence of images, a salable commodity (p. 100).

The key characteristic of the “shamelebrity is that he/she is a real person, not some fragment

of a press agent's imagination. She/he has crossed over into Shameland and returned... almost. Only after media attention does this character become mythic, a fragment of our popular imagination" (Twitchell, 1997, p. 102-103). Twitchell (1997) continues by establishing four types of shamelebrity. The first type are so-called wannabes who revel in their own egregious behavior and seek confrontation from fellow guests in order to get their '15 minutes of fame'. The second are real-life characters of reality TV or entertainment programs embroiled in contentious social situations. The third type are celebrities who have established their fame and engage in the dismantling of it. This is mainly done in retrospective tell-all exposés about a previously unknown situation. And lastly, there is the "pinnacle shamelebrity" who concentrates on a singular subversion of shameful codes.

Trisha Paytas has enacted the second, third and fourth types at various stages in her career as she partakes in shaming practices and persons intentionally subverting shame codes. Crystal Abidin (2016) further develops Twitchell's model as the scholar argues for a reconceptualization to suit media platforms and the reconfiguration of celebrification in the age of social media. This is necessary as the context has changed between Twitchell's formulation and the present as he studied these individuals in the age before social media. A major difference is that in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, shamelebrities had little access to the audience receptions and reactions, while those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not only aware but are actively engaged with both fans and haters thanks to the development of interactive social media platforms. Moreover, shamelebrities are able to mediate an Internet persona with social media platforms from the comfort of their home and curate narratives of the self which can be negotiated to their personal liking (Abidin, 2016).

Another aspect which differentiates shamelebrities, who are Internet celebrities, is that they are self-made entrepreneurs, who unlike the celebrities who dismantle their fame in tell-all exposés or are "pinnacle shamelebrity", do not have a paid staff of public relations experts (Alperstein, 2019). As such, it is up to the microcelebrity who partakes in shamelebrity practices to independently curate and main their self-image. (Abidin, 2016).

Lastly, it is important to point out that this thesis examines a type of shamelebrity who is actively and intentionally practicing self-shaming. Twitchell's (1997) work focused more on instances of celebrities who accidentally found themselves in situations of shame. Abidin (2016) argues that Internet celebrities, such as Trisha Paytas, continuously curate and develop a marketing strategy with no formal visions of a crossover to legitimate celebrity status and usually blatantly disregards haters.

## **2.2. Attention economy**

Attention is the most valuable resource in modern-day capitalism (Zulli, 2017). With the emergence of digital technology and social media platforms, being watched and getting attention is as valuable as watching and giving attention (Andrejevic, 2009). Achieving attention on social media platforms means individuals are competing for attention. And this makes the individual who garners the most attention from followers and networks a successful attention grabber (Zulli, 2017). The influence of the predominant 'attention economy' that is currently active online is garnering more academic consideration (Burgess and Green, 2008; Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2013). Goldhaber (1997) posits that attention is the most scarce commodity which essentially gave rise to a new type of economy which he termed attention economy. He further argued that "economies are governed by what is scarce", however, society is paradoxically shifting towards an age of abundant and overflowing information which is seemingly drowning us (Goldhaber, 1997). Thus, attention is received through originality, transparency and the ability to convert attention to other currencies or resources (Abidin, 2016). Davenport and Beck (2001) add on by stating that "capital, labour, information and knowledge are all in plentiful supply", while it is "human capital" which is the scarce resource that is hard to come by (p. 2).

Within the YouTube ecology, content creators are increasingly battling for attention especially since the creation of the Partner Program (Burgess, 2012). Strangelove (2020) identifies an enormous oversupply of options for the viewers to watch on YouTube, which leads to content creators actively competing with each other. Moreover, boyd (2011) claims that online attention is very much a 'limited resource' that works as a profitable 'commodity' (p. 53). Therefore, achieving attention online implies having high visibility as well as the highly valued ability to "command an audience" (Marwick, 2013, p. 77). These factors aid in making an online celebrity more valuable with each click and view. On YouTube these are what known as popularity markers which are the views, comments and subscriptions a content creator is able to generate (Garci-Rapp, 2017). While there exists a vast amount of vlogging styles (Hillrichs, 2016), the competition for viewers nevertheless remains fierce. This has led to a phenomenon known as clickbait. In relation to YouTube, clickbait refers to the form of false content designed explicitly to attract user's attention and make them curious to watch the video (Varshney & Vishwakarma, 2021).

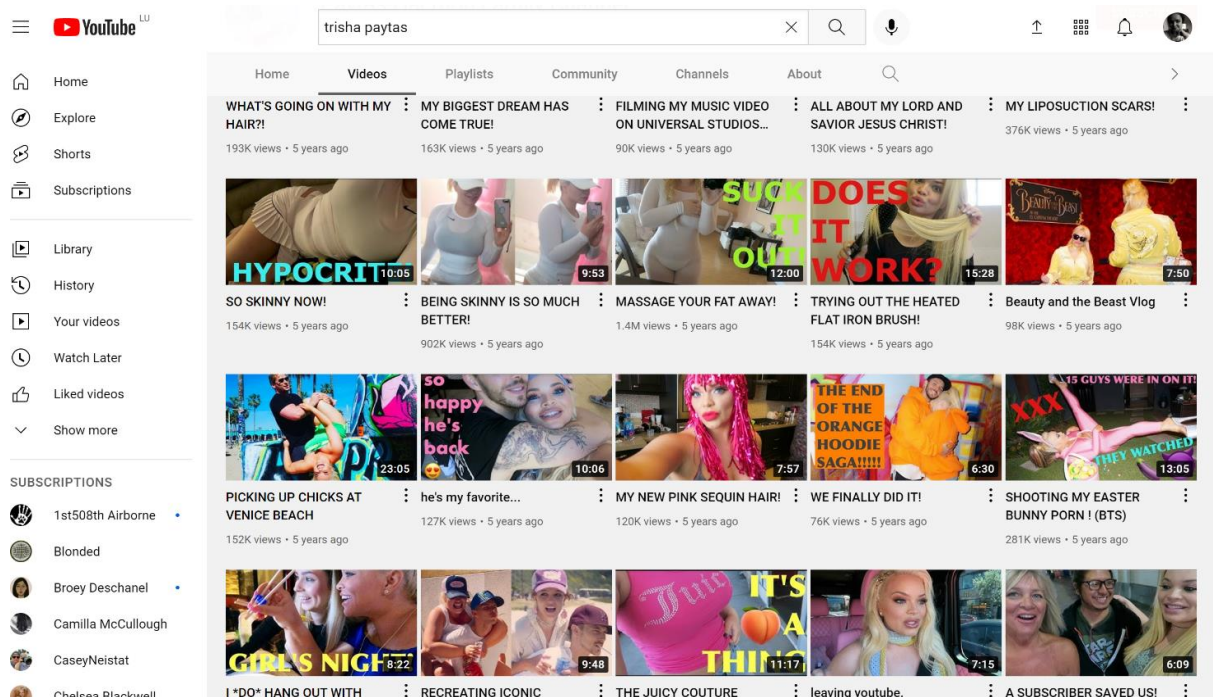
This concept is important in understanding what may drive YouTube vloggers to utilize clickbait strategies, but also cross social and moral boundaries in hopes of generating and maintaining their subscription count. Zannettou et al. (2018) outline various techniques



used by YouTube vloggers such as the use of eye-catching thumbnails, such as depictions of abnormal stuff or attractive adults, the use of intriguing headlines, and encapsulating false information to either the headlines or thumbnail. YouTubers who employ such techniques to their video content can be defined as clickbaits (Zannettou et al., 2018). Trisha Paytas is known for including a lot of content with catchy, edgy and controversial titles and thumbnails and often includes false information about the statements she makes in her videos. Despite it being unethical, YouTubers deliberately manipulate the heading and the thumbnail so as to attract a larger audience by baiting them into viewing their content (Vadde et al., 2020). As a result, the clickbait content of the video often mismatches with the heading of the video or the thumbnail of the video (Shang, 2019). This is the case with Trisha Paytas as she often uses very explicit thumbnails to attract people, however, the content of the video mismatches with the thumbnail as it is not explicit content, but rather an ordinary vlog about her daily activities (see figure 1 and 2).

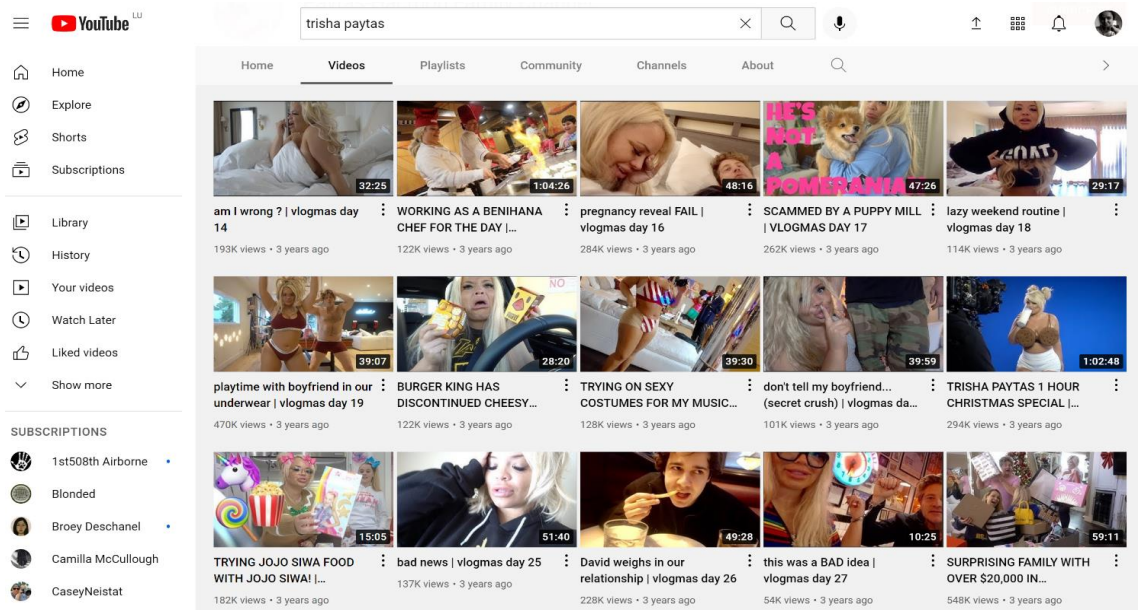
**Figure 1**

*Screenshot of Trisha Paytas channel – Illustrating clickbait videos*



**Figure 2**

*Screenshot Trisha Paytas channel – Illustrating clickbait videos*



In the legacy media era, the adage “There’s no such thing as bad publicity” often applied well to the celebrity industry because scandals often helped to both drive sales of tabloid publications and keep someone in the public eye of course as long as the conduct isn’t reprehensible as to permanently destroy the celebrity’s allure or so disruptive as to adversely affect their employability (Ng, 2020). This holds true for social media influencers at times because the “drama” of bad behavior can generate an increase in views, likes, comments, and posts. On the other hand, significant losses of followers and negative online sentiment is also a potential outcome which leads a decrease in revenue an influencer earns from a platform, as well as sponsors severing of financial ties (Ng, 2020).

### 2.3. The YouTube drama community

YouTube is a successful video sharing platform was launched in 2005. As has been alluded to in the previous section, YouTube provides an interface in which users can upload, publish and views videos and all this can be done without a high level of technical knowledge (Burgess & Green, 2009). No limitations have been set in terms of the number of videos users can upload. Moreover, the site offers basic community functions such as linking to other users and provides URLs and HTML codes that permit videos to be sent easily as well as shared or embedded on other websites (Burgess et al., 2009).

Since its genesis, YouTube has scaled up and gone mainstream (Burgess & Green, 2020). While it appears that most individuals watch the videos uploaded to the site without engaging through comments and subscribing (Madden, 2007). However, YouTube does

appear to function as a social networking site for a small portion of users (Burgess et al., 2020). Burgess et al. (2020) posit that users who contribute to content, refer to, build on and critique each other's videos, as well as collaborate (and/or argue) with one another constitutes YouTube's social core. These users thus appear to collectively identify and exploit opportunities to improve the manner in which YouTube works through their own practices (Von Hippel, 2005). Vlogging as a central genre of YouTube is an emblematic form of YouTube participation (Burgess et al., 2020). This genre invites critique, debate and discussion and are frequently a response to other vlogs which generates debate (Burgess et al., 2020).

The drama community can be understood as a form of vlogging, however, it should be pointed out that some channels do not partake in the conventional practice of sitting in front of a camera and report their findings. Instead they use animations and images of those in question in what can be understood as an attempt to conceal their identity. Drama channels aim to publish gossip and commentary about the YouTube community as a whole (Lawson, 2020). These channels appear to form an online community. According to Baym (2005), an online communities often has a shared sense of space, a shared practice, shared resources and support, shared identities and interpersonal relationships. Some of these aspects can be applied to drama channels, Drama channels have a shared space of YouTube. They share a practice of vlogging, constructing and presenting their personas as YouTube reporters. They have shared resources and support – they share information with each other, have access to the same editing and filming resources. And have interpersonal relationship with each other which can be seen for instance with collaborative drama or commentary videos. Therefore, these channels form a community by Baym's standards since it is brought together through shared practice of vlogging about drama on YouTube.

#### **2.4. Digital Vigilantism**

The rapid growth of technologies has generated many new social phenomena. Our visibility has expanded due to these advances as we can see what individuals are doing online. As such, a new type of surveillance has emerged which has most recently been conceptualised as digital vigilantism by Daniel Trottier (2017), but goes by many names such as online vigilantism (Wall & Williams, 2007), digilantism (Prins, 2010), cyber vigilantism (Marx, 2013). These scholars posit that this phenomenon is the result of moral outrage among ordinary civilians that are caused by an incident (or situation??) in either the online and offline world. These digital vigilantes aim to pursue some form of justice and do so without

the aid of proper law enforcement officials (Wall & Williams, 2007; Trottier, 2017; Marx, 2013; Prins, 2010).

This thesis will explore the complexities of this concept and will hence forward use the term digital vigilantism. Trottier (2020) defines digital vigilantism (DV) as a response towards criminal events or offences that transgress moral and normative boundaries. When a crime or moral offense has been committed, communities respond online in a myriad of ways which can be understood as a form of mediated justice seeking. Trottier (2020) argues that these instances of DV can be spontaneous and un-reflexive activities or coordinated plan of action. DV is an enactment of citizenship that contests as well as reinforces forms of state power and policing (Trottier, 2020). As mentioned, it includes a wide range of activities, for instance naming and shaming practices as well as denouncing and doxing the alleged offender. The offender is identified online and is made visible on social media platforms in an effort to seek justice.

Johnston (1996) has delineated vigilantism through six specific elements. Firstly, Johnston (1996) describes the act of planning, premeditation and organization in which the vigilantes engage in some form of preparatory activity, such as surveillance of a certain individual, group or location. Secondly, there is private voluntary agency (Johnston, 1996) in which vigilantism is undertaken by ordinary citizens who are neither approved nor endorsed by the state. Thirdly, there is autonomous citizenship (Johnston, 1996) in which these citizens form a social movement. Fourthly, Johnston (1996) describes the use or threat of using force in which the violence can be either symbolic or physical. The fifth element involves the reaction to crime and social deviance (Johnston, 1996) where vigilantism is aimed at re-establishing order after a transgression has transpired. A distinction is made between crime control and societal control with the latter focusing on “the maintenance of communal, ethnic or sectarian order and values” (Johnston, 1996, p. 228). This thesis focuses on vigilantism aimed at maintaining both crime and societal control. These elements were found to be present during the exploratory phase of the chosen case study subject and are taken as criteria to examine whether the reaction and commentary videos of YouTubers show signs of vigilantism. After Trisha Paytas’s uploaded a controversial video in 2019 onto her channel, audiences and content creators were quick to respond to it by uploading reaction videos on their own channels and on other social media platforms which can be understood as planning an act of vigilantism by ordinary citizens mainly from North America. Moreover, a now infamous subreddit ‘Trishyland’ has formed and an online petition to deplatform Trisha Paytas from all social media platforms has been launched. The subreddit and YouTube

community have threatened Trisha Paytas with weaponized visibility (Trottier, 2017) in that they continue to expose her past and present transgression and crimes in hopes from having her banned and removed from the Internet permanently.

There are a myriad of reasons why individuals decide to participate in digital vigilantism (Albrechtslund, 2008). Often there appears to be a lack in confidence in the police, not caring about the privacy of others, peer pressure and those who trust in the Internet services and those behind those services can be incentives to engage in digital vigilantism (Albrechtslund, 2008). Lack of confidence in YouTube's and the Internet's regulations and policies becomes apparent in the case of Trisha Paytas when thus far Trisha has not suffered any consequences and many of her content which breaks with YouTube's guidelines are still up. Both YouTube content creators and audiences act as digital vigilantes towards her shamebrity practices. Due to the heavy flow of content being produced and uploaded to YouTube and its interactive nature – liking, sharing and commenting – the audience is able to engage with the audio-visual content. Thus in contemporary society, when controversy of any nature occurs YouTubers and microcelebrities can directly respond to their content and this leads to engaging with their followers, audiences. Unfortunately, due to this immediacy there seems to be no time for self-reflection (Linton, 2020) on the part of the microcelebrity. Furthermore, in the age of cancel culture, microcelebrities have to be responsible and show responsibility towards their own awareness of cultural significance and the connotations of their content (Linton, 2020).

#### **2.4.1. *Cancel culture***

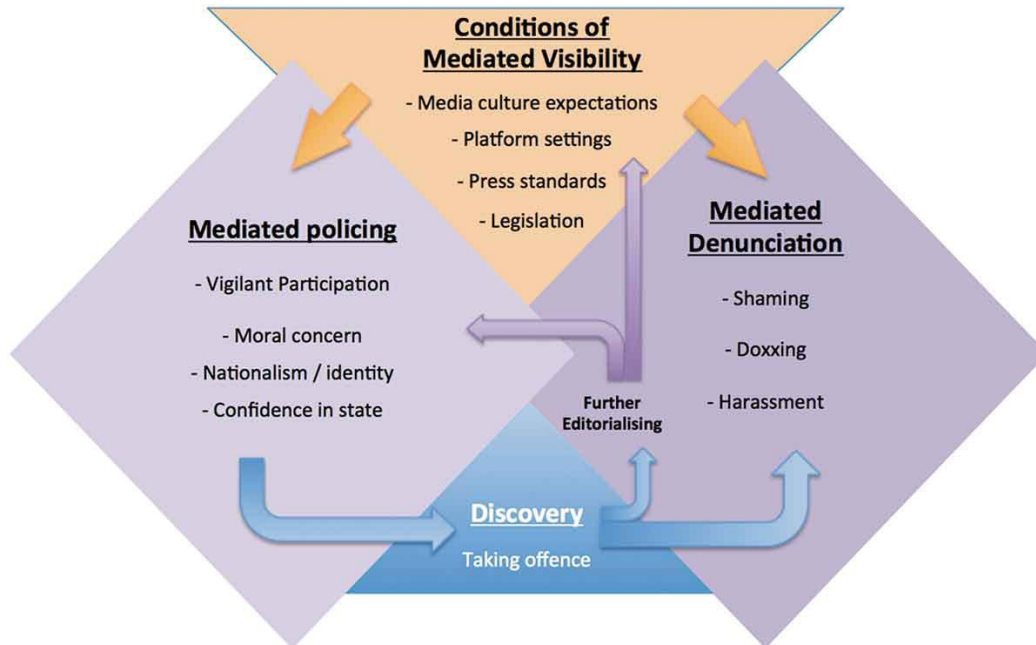
The cancel culture phenomenon shares several elements with digital vigilantism campaigns. A major concept within digital vigilantism is public shaming online (Trottier, 2014). Public shaming acts are also a core concept of cancel culture and reflect a form of vigilantism by which individuals attempt to enforce social control when the established order is under threat of transgression (Hou et al., 2017). The objective is to make the transgression or crime visible online, what Trottier (2014) calls weaponized visibility. Such weaponised visibility is an instance of individuals leveraging digital media for particular socio-political ends (Castells, 2012). These ends encompass both conventional justice through legal channels or unconventional justice such as petition to terminate employment (Trottier, 2014). Moreover, another important similarity is the fact that cancellations are led by ordinary citizens and not by police or state officials.

For this reason, cancel culture as a digital phenomenon will be examined through the

conceptual model of digital vigilantism to capture the process which consists of distinct stages with those consisting of specific practices themselves (Trottier, 2020).

**Figure 3**

*Conceptual model of digital vigilantism (Trottier, 2020)*



This model is utilized to examine cancel culture and the case subject because it appears Trisha Paytas downfall was not the consequence of a cancellation but form of digital vigilantism. After being cancelled Trisha Paytas would either apologies or simply continue uploading until her transgression was forgotten. Moreover, her shamelebrity practices intensified as time progressed from uploading a video in which she questions if dogs have brains to claiming she has dissociative identity disorder and showing her alters as they switch from one to the other on camera. This has led to new practices emerging within the YouTube community that go beyond the simple act of cancelling Trisha Paytas as content creators now conduct thorough investigation and upload them videos to YouTube. This makes Trisha Paytas’s case very interesting as it is made more complex as this case amalgamates cancel culture and digital vigilantism.

Trottier’s (2020) model demonstrates these stages in order, beginning with mediated policing, followed by discovery and ending with mediated denunciation practices. Mediated policing is the first stage and refers to the pre-emptive potential for a campaign (Trottier, 2020). Explicit or implicit appeals can be made to the audience and a reactive mode of

policing versus a deliberate seeking out of questionable behavior might occur (Trottier, 2020). Mediated policing then leads to the discovery phase in which a crime or transgression has been witnessed and then uploaded or through a proactive search for objectionable content in the individual's online presence (Trottier, 2020). The last phase is mediated denunciation sustained by the initial discovery and through circulation through digital media by a wide range of social actors (Trottier, 2020). Those participating will denunciate values on the target who is identified and scrutinised through their personal information and their reputation. Considering microcelebrities, it is important to highlight that their reputation is a key aspect which constitutes a critical factor for monetizing their work (de Oliveira Nunes, 2022). In the case of Trisha Paytas, the aim is to ruin her reputation, her most important asset (de Oliveira Nunes, 2020) in hopes that her audience and brands will withdraw support (Ng, 2020). As such, the reputation of the target is often comprised through the denunciatory coverage as well as explicitly reported on in references to the aftermath of the campaign (Trottier, 2020).

In the case of Trisha Paytas, she became a prominent YouTube vlogger which means that a great deal of her everyday life has been captured and uploaded to the platform. As such, the digital vigilantes utilized the platform itself to conduct amateur detective work by searching through her videos (Loveluck, 2010) and making the offensive ones visible using their own channels and other social media platforms, such as Twitter and Reddit. After a specific offence has been found, there is a call for websleuthing in order to collect more digital evidence (Loveluck, 2020). Websleuthing involves “varying levels of amateur detective work including but not limited to searching for information, uploading documents, images and videos, commenting, debating, theorizing, analyzing, identifying suspects” (Yardley et al., 2018, p. 82). In relation to celebrity culture online, these investigations use the term ‘receipts’ to describe evidence of the wrongdoings which are often drawn from public and private social media posts (Ng, 2020). While Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and legacy media cover Trisha Paytas extensively, this thesis will only examine digital vigilantism occurring on YouTube.

### **3. Methodology**

This thesis aims to explore how Trisha Paytas's cyclical shamelebrity practices triggered modes of vigilantism after several failed cancellations. Focusing on the two last scandals which are also the most severe have been chosen and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter (see synopsis of the results' chapter). Thus, a comparative case study is conducting to examine differences and similarities. The scandals have been titled 'DID scandal' and 'teacher scandal' for clarity sake. Therefore, the chosen time period for this research is 2020 until 2022. The answer to the research question was found by conducting a qualitative thematic content analysis of YouTube videos by a number of several content creators.

#### **3.1. Data collection**

This thesis collected data in the form of YouTube videos. More specifically, focusing on drama and commentary channels were the chosen community and videos from these types of channels were collected. These channels essentially cover conflicts and scandals taking place among YouTube influencers (Chistin & Lewis, 2021).

Sampling was the first process of data collection which focuses on choosing a part of the population to represent the whole (Naderifar et al., 2017). For the scope of this thesis videos by drama channels and commentary channels were chosen (see appendix A). The data was gathered through two keyword searches on YouTube. For the first search, the following words were used to "Trisha Paytas DID scandal" and "Trisha Paytas mental health". These two words searches proved to be successful. For the second, the words "Trisha Paytas teacher scandal" was used which did not generate the desired outcome. It appeared this was not how YouTubers were describing this second scandal and therefore, drama channels from the previous scandal were used to see how this particular scandal was being titled. It seemed that Trisha Paytas and breakdown were the words of choice and so, these were put into the search bar. This search was successful and generated various videos on this scandal. Then the snowball sampling method (Frey, 2018) was used with additional videos being identified through the "Up next" list where relevant videos were suggested by the YouTube algorithm.. The entire corpus of videos consisted of over two hundred YouTube videos. Thus, the following stage was to eliminate videos which would not contribute to the research subject through purposive sampling. Videos which were not uploaded by drama channels or



commentary channels were omitted. Secondly, those that did not fall in the chosen time period were eliminated. The videos had to be commenting on, responding and reacting toward either the 'DID scandal' or 'teacher scandal'. Lastly, the decision was made to attempt to have an equal number of videos per period in order to show similarities and differences between these two scandals.

A total of 33 videos were selected for this research. A description of the YouTubers and the selected videos will be included in appendix A, thereby adding transparency to this research. Furthermore, videos by Paytas which sparked these reaction and response videos will additionally be included in order to observe the shamelebrity practices in order to better understand the context of each incident more in depth.

### **3.2. Data analysis**

This thesis opted for a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one, more specifically the choice was made to use thematic qualitative analysis. Qualitative and quantitative content analyses comprise the operationalization of concepts and data gathering (Boeije, 2012). Quantitative content analysis focuses on the numerical description of the text (MacDonald, 2008) with the importance of the topic being measured by counting the number of times a topic appears, thus the more is appears in the text, the more important to becomes (MacDonald, 2008). Therefore, by focusing on the number of times a topic is present in the text, it is only possible to obtain a surface-level meaning of said text (MacDonald, 2008). In this light, opting for a qualitative content analysis was found to be more suitable because it focuses more on the meaning that people give to the data, rather than the potential numerical important (Gilbert, 2008). Qualitative content analysis permits the examination for studying human behavior and the discovery or patterns and themes within the selected text (Gilbert, 2008; Boeije, 2012). The aim of this thesis is to research how transgressions are negotiated within the YouTube community, thus the research question centers on how certain data extracts would contain aspects of cancel culture and digital vigilantism as provided by the literature in the previous chapter. In this way, a qualitative content analysis permitted the discovery of themes that made up both cancel culture and digital vigilantism.

Thematic qualitative analysis was the specific method chosen for this thesis. It is a research method that enables researchers to analyze qualitative data which entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report recurrent patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As such, this method was deemed most appropriate because it permits for generalizations of patterns arising from the data and provides a basis to establish connection between the said

patterns (Williamson et al., 2008). The focus lies on the meaning people give to the data, instead of relying on numerical importance of this data (Gilbert, 2008). This makes qualitative content analysis optimal for studying human behavior and allows for discovery of patterns or regularities in the data (Gilbert, 2008; Boeije, 2012). The focus lies on the perspectives of the YouTubers who are reacting and responding to Trisha Paytas's content on YouTube. Additionally, it is a suitable approach to research and examine the evolution of the Trisha Paytas case over a specific period of time. This research centers around understanding how YouTubers have negotiated the subject over the past two years and how this can be understood through a digital vigilantism framework. Thus, a thematic qualitative analysis gives enough flexibility to observe this evolution properly. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, qualitative research enables to interpretation and explanations of the various concepts (outlined in the previous chapter) that are being researched for this study.

Applying this method uses an inductive approach to arrive at themes (Braun & Clarke's, 2008). In other words, the themes emerge from the data itself. This differs from a deductive approach in which themes are based on the theory of a given research topic. Conducting a thematic content analysis requires a systematic step-by-step procedure which enables the researcher to work in an organized and clear fashion (Schreier, 2013). Following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2008) were utilized to guide the analysis. These steps consist of the researcher familiarizing themselves with the data, generating initial codes, locating themes, reviewing these themes, defining and naming these themes and finally producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

### **3.3. Reliability and validity**

Validity and reliability are words not typically associated with qualitative research, instead they are more prevalent to its quantitative counterpart. Nevertheless, some scholars, such as Silverman (2014) and Brennen (2017) posit that these same terms can be used to refer to similar standards in order to ensure academic rigor that qualitative research demands.

According to Silverman (2011) the reliability of a research project can be understood as "the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production" (p. 360). In other words, reliability centers around the idea that other scholars could replicate the study using the same methods and come up with the same results (Silverman, 2011). In order to achieve reliability in such a study such as this thesis transparency in the research and theoretical process is key. It is important to describe the decision made and explaining why these decisions have been increasing the possibility of

others to replicate the study.

The theoretical framework of this thesis, concepts and theories have been described in detail and therefore, provide an insight in the research pertaining to this study. The process of collecting the data was made visible in the second chapter of this thesis and a full descriptions and links to the videos have been placed in Appendix A. Specifically, the search for data on YouTube and selection process was described in detail in this chapter. In essence, the reliability of this research was increased through the transparency within the data collection, the method of analysis and the concepts and theories used.

Concerning the validity of this research, it is helpful to point out that in quantitative studies this concept refers to the findings corresponding to the specific subject matter being studied and how well those findings relate to similar studies on this topic (Brennen, 2017). In other words, research is regarded as valid when it gives an account of phenomenon it said to describe (Silverman, 2011). Thus, the authenticity of what is being studied should be questioned by the researcher (Silverman, 2011). Guaranteeing the validity of this study meant to ensure that the findings regarding modes of digital vigilantism used by YouTubers were indeed based on data exhibiting instances of public shaming and websleuthing to name a few. Hence, the interpretations of the findings in the results' chapter are repeatedly linked back to the academic literature. Data extracts are included in this chapter as well to both show and strengthen the arguments being made. Additionally, using appropriate tabulations refers to using some form of statistics to back up one's arguments (Silverman, 2011). This was done by stating that an X number of YouTube videos contained a certain amount of sentences related to the theme Z of digital vigilantism.

What is indicative of the accuracy with which the concept of digital vigilantism was studied is the fact the findings show a robust alignment with similar studies on the subject on digital vigilantism such as the conceptual framework by Trottier (2020). Lastly, Silverman (2011) further notes factors such as the researcher's values and his/her impact on the setting to be of importance to the overall validity. As such, a self-reflexive attitude and an active, yet obtrusive role was adopted for this thesis.

## **4. Results**

This research focuses on the negotiations of YouTubers about Paytas and her shamelebrity practices in the last two years. The analysis included videos from 2020 until 2022. The analysis was organized in chronological. Therefore, the analysis is organized using two controversies within two different periods which generated a lot of buzz on YouTube. A synopsis will be provided, followed by the results.

### **4.1. DID scandal**

#### **4.1.1. Synopsis**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, Trisha Paytas uploaded a video that would lead to another major scandal. In this video titled “Meet My Alter”, Paytas explained to her audience that she had self-diagnosed herself with dissociative identity disorder. She went on to stating that she had multiple personalities such as Tyranny, the bossy and rather aggressive one, and Tobolter, the protector. This video gained a lot of attention on YouTube and a wave of reactions videos from all niche communities swiftly emerged. Many YouTubers pointed out how Anthony Padilla had uploaded an in-depth video on dissociative identity disorder through interviews with individuals diagnosed with this particular disorder only days prior, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March to be exact. This video was immensely successful as it generated millions of views and currently has nineteen million views. Therefore, it came as little surprise when Paytas had been called out by YouTuber Anthony Padilla which led her to upload a second video directly responding to his criticism. Soon after, Paytas followed up on this topic with yet another video in which she claimed to have caught herself switching on camera. This video was both addressing the severe criticism and acting as ‘proof’ she had this mental health disorder. It could be argued that these two videos were Paytas engaging with the criticism by standing her ground and responding with heated arguments and argumentative retorts. The three videos can be found in Appendix B.

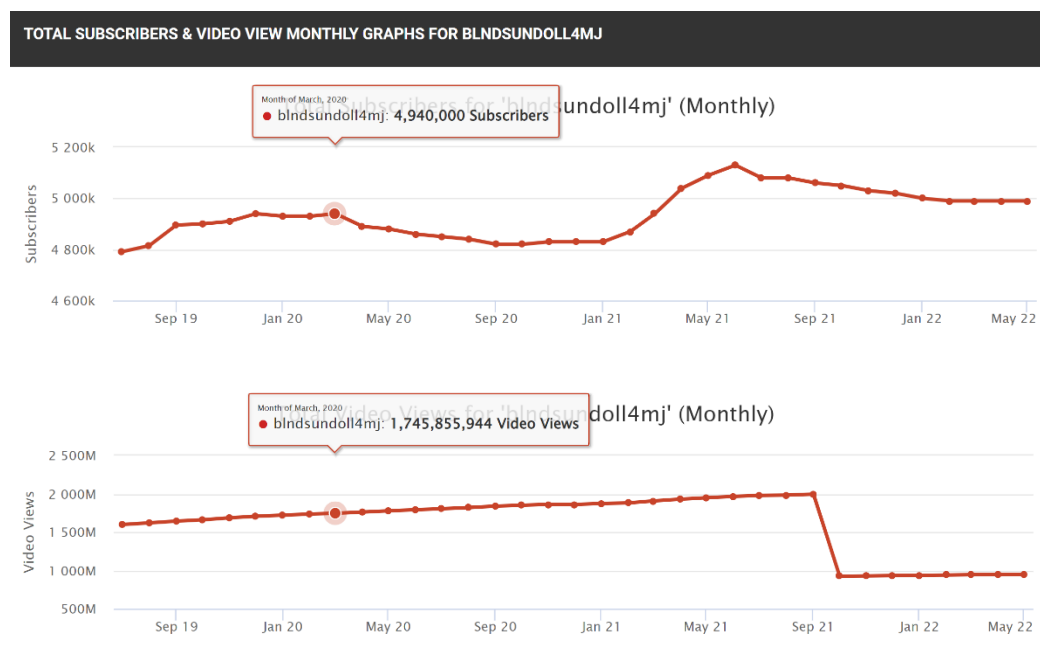
The self-shaming practices of Paytas appears to galvanize weaponized shame (Abidin, 2016). In other words, Paytas was shaming the YouTube community in order to win more followers. Furthermore, in this specific scandal Paytas adequately understood vernacular shame among her viewers – that inauthentically vlogging about a specific topic for clickbait was wrong – and was able to mobilize her shaming practices as weaponized shame – by discussing dissociative identity disorder in order to wrestle more attention to themselves and

increase their following. The following figure demonstrates how her subscriber count not only did not suffer, but went up slightly during this scandal and her views continued to steadily grow which shows the success of her shaming practices.

It is important to mention that including the views and engagement of the videos of Paytas is not possible as she deleted over 1500 videos in 2021. This would have made the argument stronger, however, the reasoning behind this mass deletion will be discussed in the following scandal.

**Figure 4**

*Screenshot of Paytas’s channel statistics during the DID scandal (SocialBlade, 2022)*



This scandal appears to show that Paytas did not fully grasp vernacular shame amongst her viewers nor a sense of appropriate scale – wrongly anticipating that making false allegations would garner her attention and views despite the severity and shock-value of her claims.

#### **4.1.2. Results**

Four key themes were identified during the DID scandal : 1) Denouncing Trisha 2) Trolling pays 3) Establishing a pattern of behavior 4) A desire to disprove Trisha

##### **4.1.2.1. Denouncing Trisha**

The first theme to emerge was denunciations. In sixteen videos, YouTubers were visible

morally outraged and expressed shame toward the videos Paytas uploaded about her claims of having dissociative identity disorder. In other words, the reactions toward this vlogging topic were negatively received by the drama and commentary community on YouTube. For instance, outrage was expressed with one YouTuber stating “all I can say is that I am disgusted” (helloleesh, 2020) and another directly addressing Paytas “Trisha this is disgusting behavior. It is not okay.” (Bellelevision, 2020). Therefore, the online shaming appears to be geared towards the defense of a vulnerable and stigmatized community, namely the mental health community. This defense can be broadly exemplified by this YouTube commentator: “To stigmatize a community like dissociative identity disorder that already has so many negative portrayals of them and within media. I just think its so wrong.” (Kristina Maione, 2020). Similarly, another YouTube “whether you’re trolling or not you just need to stop okay because this ain’t funny no more you’re offending people” (Van Luc, 2020). In essence, these YouTubers typically made reference to the stigmatization these videos were generating.

Moreover, five videos denounced Paytas for perpetuating harmful lies and misinformation about this already stigmatized mental health disorder. For instance, one YouTuber stated “what I found wrong with the video which was a self-diagnosis adding stigma and misinformation” (TheLyfeofaFreeSpirit, 2021). Another YouTuber arguing “she’ll make a video just spewing so much misinformation that damages communities” (Kristina Maione, 2020).

Interestingly, no severe forms of hostile reactions occurred over this scandal, instead YouTubers were visibly shocked and angry over Paytas’s videos. Only two videos did include name calling practices. For instance, one YouTuber angrily said “I literally get *so pissed* me she says my truth *like bitch* my truth is that I’m the queen of England but that doesn’t mean that’s true” [emphasis added] (hot tea, 2020). And the other uttering “I’m here for today my friends to prove how much of a *literal brainless eating machine* Trisha Paytas really is” [emphasis added] (Curtis Price, 2020). While, scholars have claimed that online shaming can be understood as a form of aggression, here the denunciations focused on the actions themselves by pointing out that making videos was morally wrong and which explains their subsequent outrage toward Paytas.

Moreover, one YouTuber refused to share her reaction with her audience stating “I’m gonna keep mine to myself for now” (VangelinaSkov, 2020).

#### **4.1.2.2. Trolling pays**

The second theme to appear was regarding Paytas’s trolling practices. In eleven videos,

YouTubers appear overwhelmingly to perceive Paytas's DID vlogs as being motivated by views and attention. Thus, this theme focuses on YouTubers negotiating Paytas's specific vlogging practices as being clickbait. Firstly, in relation to this specific scandal, various YouTubers claimed Trisha had made this vlog about this specific topic after another successful YouTuber garnered a large amount of positive feedback and views on the topic of dissociate identity disorder. One YouTuber stating "it can't be anything to do with the fact that Anthony Padilla got a 3.6 million view video" (ImAllexx, 2020). In a similar statement, "I know that this video was for clickbait, I know this video was for views and I know the drama channels are going to be talking about this and it ramping it up and I also know a lot of people are upset and offended" (TheLyfeofaFreeSpriti, 2020).

These reactions toward Paytas' DID scandal shows that these YouTuber are fully aware of Paytas's controversial and problematic vlogging practices. Therefore, these videos appear to come as no surprise to them. This is broadly exemplified by the following statement:

...we're talking about Trisha Paytas and I can't believe this woman can't seem to avoid controversy for even a little bit of time every time we turn around she's managed to say something or do something that gets her wrapped up in some kind of drama and it seems like the topic of today is exploiting mental health for views... (Tipster, 2020)

In addition, some YouTubers pointed out that her videos utilize clickbait strategies. With one YouTuber pointing out in her first video on the subject:

...it's a classic Trisha troll video right so one sign of a Trisha troll video is cleavage the second sign of a troll video is either she looks really crazy in the thumbnail or she has like an outrageous makeup look like very 2015 very like 2013 2012 Trisha right and the thumbnail looking ridiculous and therefore you have a Trisha troll video... (TheLyfeofaFreeSpirit, 2020).

Additionally, some YouTubers mentioned how when Paytas's views were low, she would seek out a topic on YouTube and make a troll video. One YouTuber exemplifying this by stating:

...her numbers on social blade are in the red she had already been losing subscribers I looked at her other channels and she was already low in the views girl so for me like if she's trolling and if she's using this to get views you do something else like stop

trolling on such sensitive topics...(Van Luc7, 2020)

Another YouTuber, points to the trolling occurring in her third video in which Paytas claims to have caught the switch of her alters on camera:

...she clearly did this for attention look at what the thumbnail is look at what a thumbnail is her cross-eyed and looking all loopy if you wanted to make a serious video where you're showing a switch something that's very serious... (Kristina Maione, 2020)

And lastly, YouTubers discuss her actions and label her as a troll. According to Yip (2019) "behavioral labeling is a pattern of shaming that makes a deviant behavior and its performer become an object of public knowledge". These reactions show that Paytas is not only involved in yet another scandal, but has garnered a behavioral label by the drama community as a troll which seems to be ubiquitous within the YouTube community.

It appears that the drama and commentary community are hyper aware that Paytas uses clickbait strategies to garner success on the platform as well as it being a demonstration of the success Paytas has had utilizing negative attention-seeking strategies. Zulli (2010) posits that individuals who garners the most attention from followers and networks are deemed a successful attention grabber.

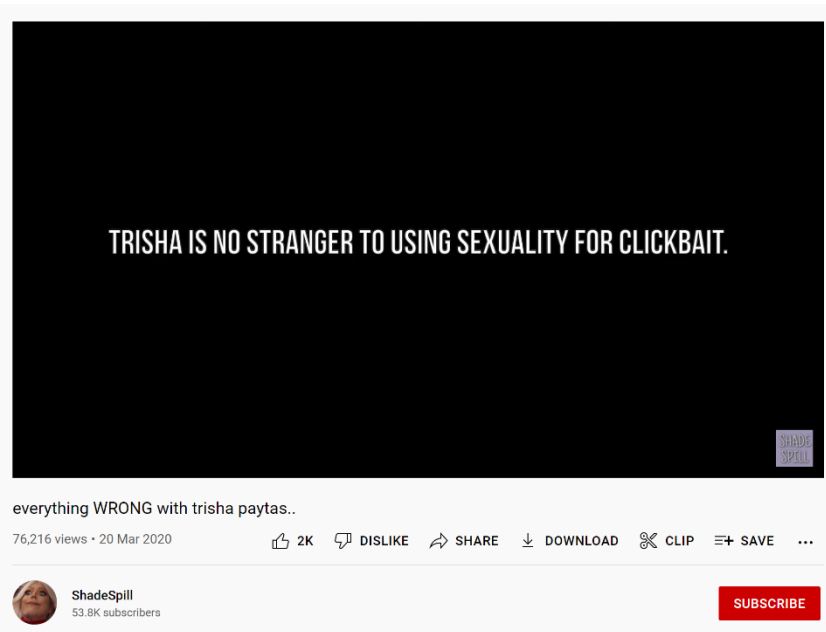
#### ***4.1.2.3. Establishing a pattern of behavior***

The third theme to emerge was to establish that Paytas. In nine videos, YouTubers' reactions toward Paytas's DID scandal was to establish a pattern of behavior for the audience to become aware of her trolling practices. For instance, one YouTuber did not use dialogue to address her audience, but rather inserted text and screenshots to bring awareness to Paytas's pattern of behavior.

#### **Figure 5**

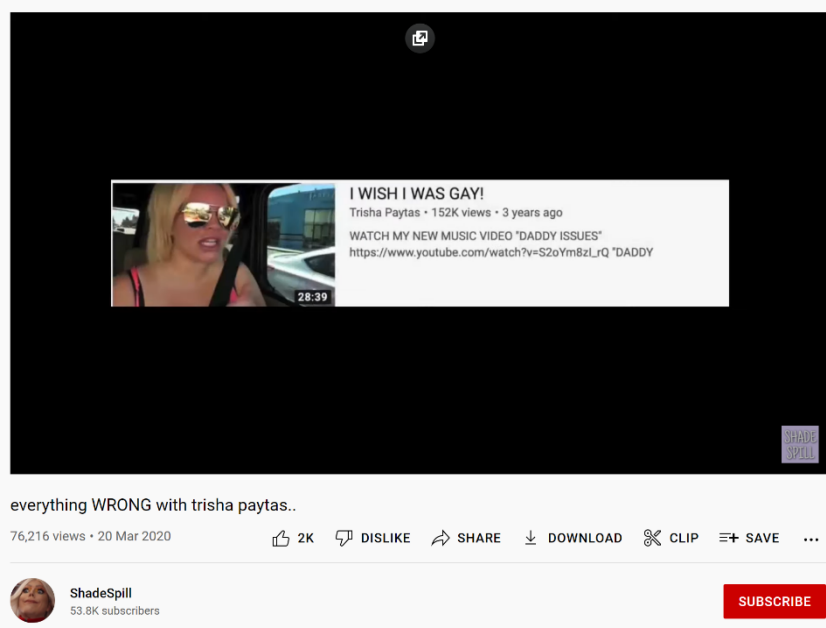
*Screenshot of YouTuber establishing a pattern of behavior*





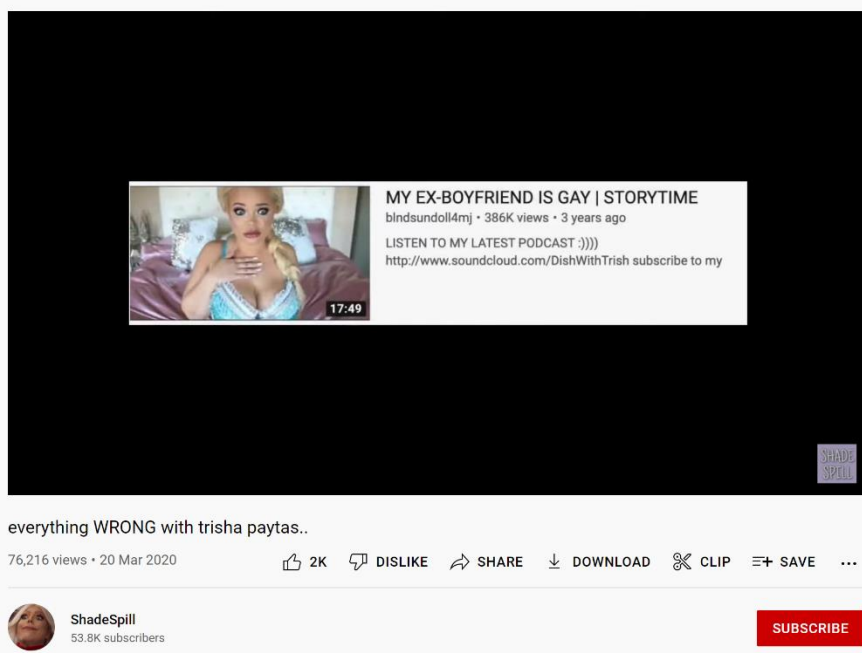
**Figure 6**

*Screenshot of YouTuber establishing a pattern of behavior*



**Figure 7**

*Screenshot of YouTuber establishing a pattern of behavior*



Other YouTubers discussed her pattern of behavior with one YouTuber broadly exemplifying this by telling her audience:

...this will show the occurring pattern that we will mention throughout this video where Trisha will do something controversial get a bunch of views and money pretend she grown for a few months and then redo the same thing... (MARKIE, 2021)

Similarly, another YouTuber argued :

“...she has made a name for herself you know some of the videos she is most famous for our sex life drinking period blood I am transgender how to look like a stripper I am a chicken nugget and I'm gay not clickbait also not a big deal...” (Young Dumb Honey Bun, 2021).

#### ***4.1.2.4. A desire to disprove Trisha***

The drama and commentary community took great offense toward Paytas’s series of video on the subject. In 10 videos, YouTubers seem to be motivated by a desire to show audiences that Paytas was in fact faking this disorder through their own arguments and the utilization of receipts.

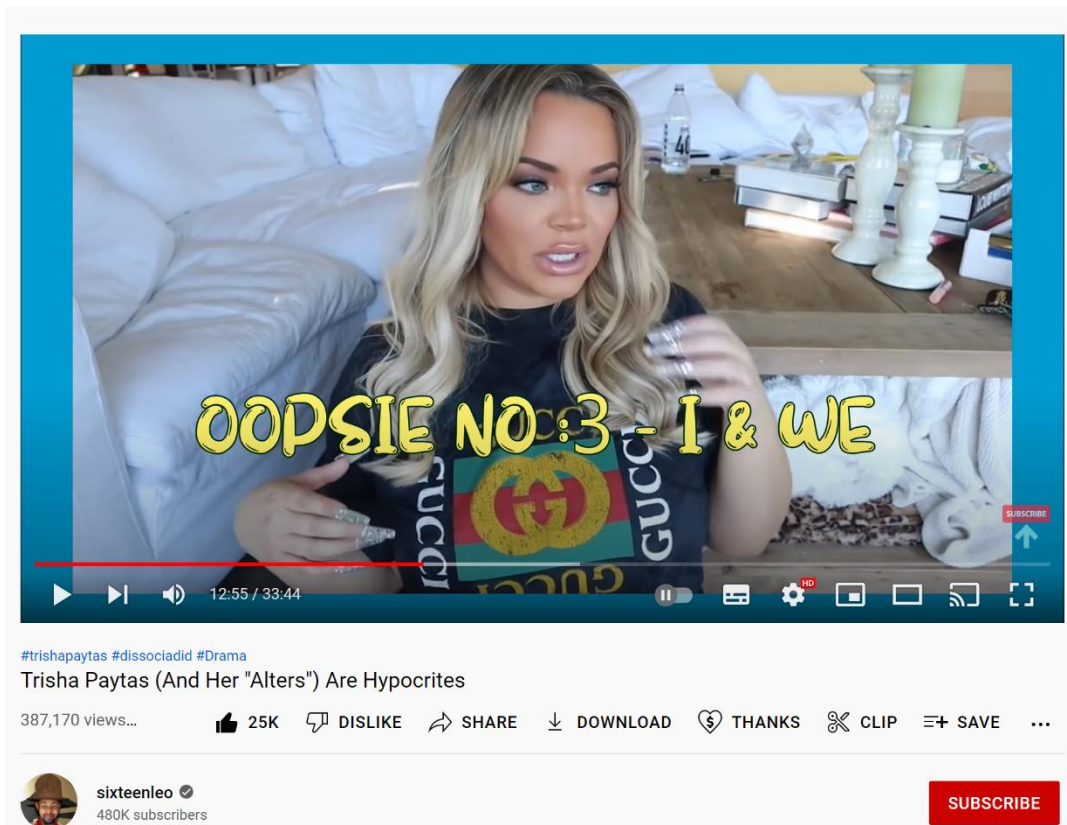
Firstly, some YouTubers dissect Paytas’s vlogs and point to inconsistency in her claims about dissociative identity disorder by “digging for dirt” in her previous vlogs (Abidin, 2016). This then can be understood as a sub-theme, namely investigating. This led to

various YouTubers inserting either screenshots or clips to prove that Trisha was in essence faking it. One Youtuber pointed out the following “mind you she had just posted a vlog on her Trisha Paytas channel saying why I am fat I feel like if this personality [...] if this personality was affecting you so badly to where you’re eating and gaining all this weight et cetera the wouldn’t you have been mentioned that ” (TheLyfeofaFreeSpirit, 2020). Another YouTuber

Various YouTubers pointed out how Paytas self-diagnosed herself which discredits her claims. With one YouTuber explaining “I think most of us agree that she needs a diagnosis and help for whatever it is that she's dealing with” (helloleesh, 2020). Moreover, another YouTuber’s sentiment broadly exemplifies how the majority felt, stating “I truly don't believe that she has dissociative identity disorder she literally said in her video that she's self-diagnosed” (Opinionated, 2020). Some also pointed out that over the years, Paytas has never used the correct pronouns in previous videos. One YouTuber dissected her video and included text to illustrate the inconsistencies in her claims (see figure 8, 9 & 10)

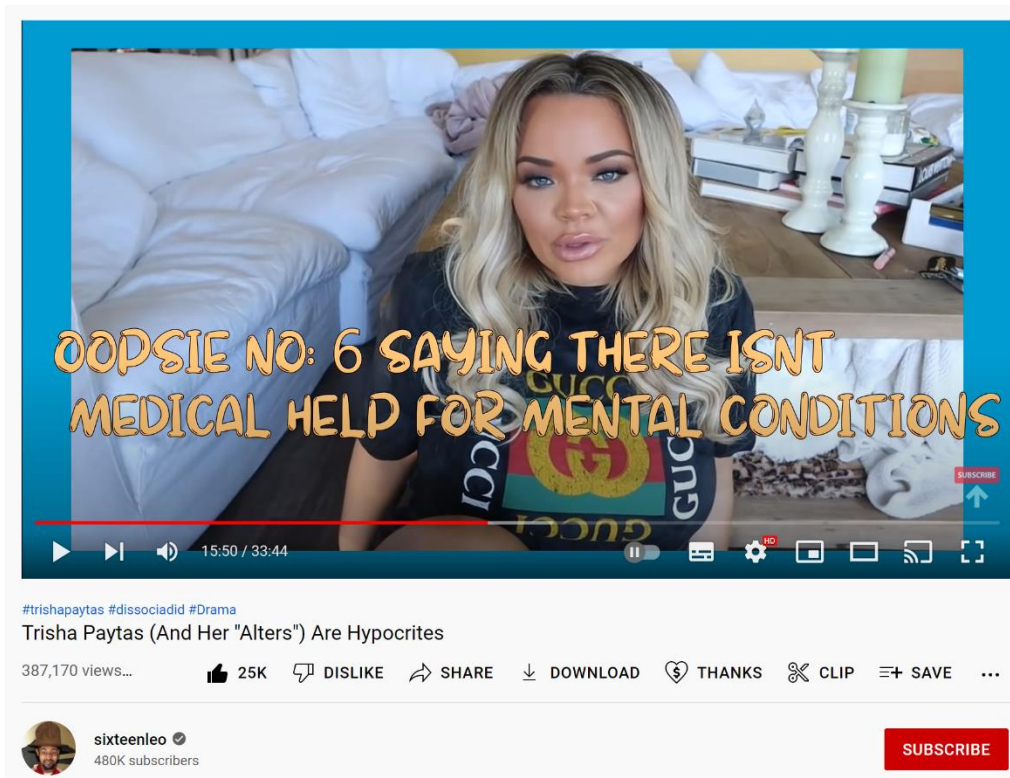
### Figure 8

*Screenshot of YouTuber pointing out inconsistencies*



**Figure 9**

*Screenshot of YouTuber pointing out inconsistencies*



The purpose of the videos on Paytas appear straight forward: to shame Paytas for using offensive content to generate views on YouTube in hopes of putting an end this this practice. The method used by YouTubers was investigating her channel and disproving her claims in their own videos. This it can be understood as a mode of vigilantism, where digital tools were used to help the investigation and raise awareness. And in keeping up with the drama, some YouTuber curated clips from her past vlogs in an attempt to disprove her claims with one YouTuber broadly exemplifying this notion “I found some new evidence about the whole Trisha Paytas DID thing. So in today’s video we’re going to be talking about” (VangelinaSkov, 2020).

Because of these scandals’ complexity, curational choices can have a profound impact on audiences’ sensemaking (Lawson, 2020). It becomes evident that the YouTubers largely desired to curated clips of her vlogs to frame Paytas as a troll who was using this topic to increase her views.

It is interesting to note, in five videos YouTubers were expressing the fact that they did believe Paytas suffered from some mental health disorders nor were they arguing she could not

potentially have this disorder. Instead, it appears these YouTubers were explicitly making reference to her vlogging practices which seemed inauthentic and were therefore facing scrutiny.

## 4.2. Teacher scandal

### 4.2.1. Synopsis

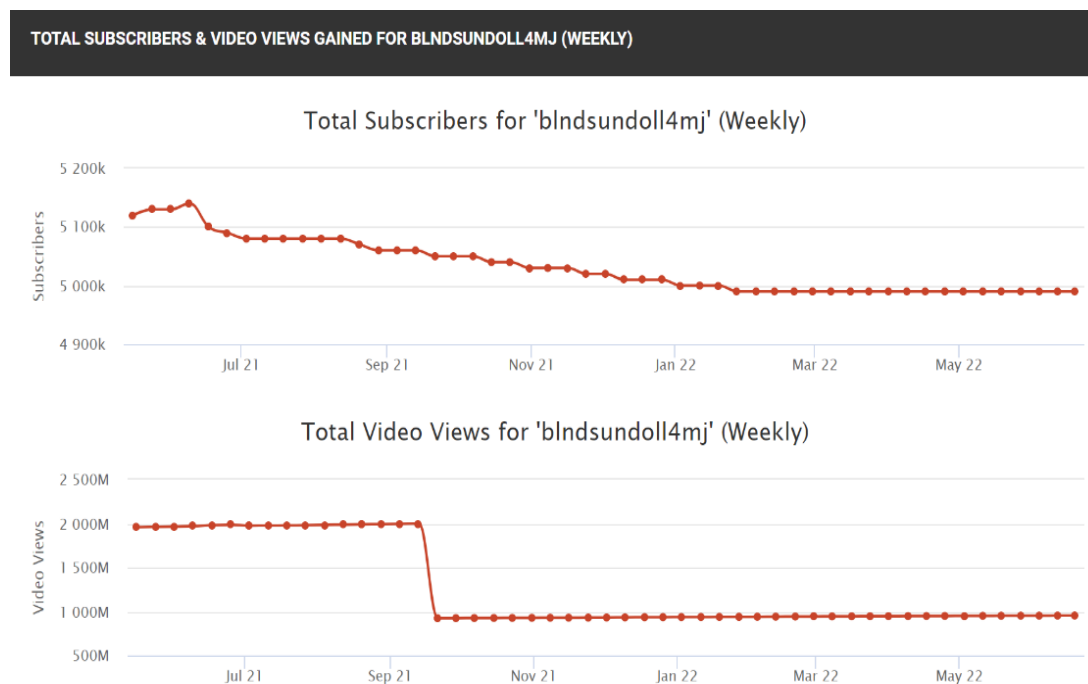
In 2021, Trisha Paytas appears to have generated the biggest scandal of her online career. Her scandal of the previous year had been put to rest with no successful cancelation and what is more, she became a podcast host with one of the more successful podcasts, H3H3. This podcast was called *Frenemies* which played on the idea that the host had a long history of drama and feuds. Surprisingly, this show became widely successful with the viewers seemingly enjoying this bizarre, but dynamic duo. This podcast was highly popular on YouTube because the decision was made to create a visual podcast with a proper set and costumes.

However, as the adage goes “all good things must come to an end” with the podcast ending in June 2021. Paytas started a major feud with Ethan Klein, the host of *Frenemies*. Their feud generated a lot of attention within the community with both H3H3 and Trisha profiting off of feud uploading many videos attempting to bash the other. Therefore, this was not the most scandalous affair of Paytas, rather it was caused by claims made on her TikTok account and her YouTube podcast *Frenemies*. On 12<sup>th</sup> of January, Paytas claimed to have been assaulted by one of her teachers in middle school and that her alleged offender was fired for looking at child pornography and a report was issued by state police, subsequently doxing him. Paytas stated this information could be found on the Internet implying she was being truthful.

Perhaps, naïvely Paytas did not think people would feel encouraged to look up the report, however, online users and YouTubers were digging for this report in hopes of validating these claims. A small drama channel, known as MYSTERIOUS, curated receipts which not only exposed the fact that there was no report, but attempting to show that Paytas was likely making up this allegation about the teacher. Other drama and commentary channels followed in her footsteps attempting to dig for dirt to expose Trisha’s lies she has told during her time on YouTube. The YouTube community was shocked by the severity of these allegations and this led to Paytas’ breakdown on Twitter in which she was manically screaming and crying claiming her life was being ruined. Furthermore, Paytas deleted over 1500 videos from her main YouTube channel which many YouTubers felt was an attempt to hide her past behavior to put an end to these expose videos that were swiftly accumulating on the platform. The following figure illustrates the deletion of videos during September as well as the decline of Paytas’s main channel.

## Figure

Screenshot of Paytas's channel statistics during teacher scandal (SocialBlade, 2022)



### 4.2.2. Results

#### 4.2.2.1. Denouncing Trisha

In 14 videos, YouTubers were denouncing Paytas for making claims made on her social media accounts. This theme emerged from the YouTuber's desire to denounce Trisha Paytas about the accusations made about her now-deceased teacher in middle school. There were typically three types of criticisms YouTubers directed at Trisha Paytas about her sexual assault allegation.

Firstly, YouTubers denounced Paytas for not being more responsible when making such serious claims about sexual assault. For example, one YouTuber explained:

...That's why in this types of situation you really have to be delicate on how you approach it how you talk about it but most of all you don't platform and spread false allegations when there is nothing that has been substantiated which proves that this actually happened... (Repzion, 2021)

Secondly, other responses included denouncing Paytas for having doxed the man in question who was no deceased and could therefore not defend himself. This was deemed

morally wrong with one YouTuber arguing “lying about an innocent dead man of a heinous crime is also horrible I know this is an issue that's going to get a lot of people upset on all sides and everybody” (hot tea, 2021).

Additionally, Paytas stated that this teacher was also arrested for watching child pornography on school computers.

Secondly, various YouTubers denounced Paytas for trying to copy-right claim a drama channel for conducting a thorough investigation of these claims and uploading it to their platform. In essence, this video was the catalyst that exposed Paytas for lying about her sexual assault claims. Moreover, it is important to note that YouTuber were aware of the fact that this was speculation, however, they felt that it was the most likely scenario. One YouTuber explains “I think there is a high possibility that Trisha may have done these complaints when she was going through a breakdown” (Repzilla, 2021).

Lastly, YouTubers expressed criticism at the fact that Paytas was not taking accountability for her action, instead they believed she was shifting blame toward her time on the *Frenemies* podcast. For example, one YouTuber argued “she's shifting blame she's saying that this is karma for when she was on frenemies which is inadvertently aiming back to uh Ethan’s channels so she's again shifting blame towards them not taking any accountability for herself” (Repzilla, 2021). Another Youtuber shared a similar sentiment, stating “I personally think that Trisha is a very dangerous person that uses mental health and trauma as a shield to avoid backlash for the toxic behavior that they display online” (MYSTERIOUS, 2021).

#### **4.2.2.2. *Establishing a pattern of behavior***

In seven videos, YouTubers were pointing out Paytas shamelebrity vlogging practices in order to show their audience an established pattern of behavior. With this scandal, YouTubers felt that Paytas truly lost all sense of boundaries and would do anything for attention. In this scandal, YouTubers focused on the fact that Paytas often played the victim card. For instance, one YouTuber explained her stance

... Trisha Paytas feeds off of attention and they will do anything to get it. Trisha has made millions of dollars off of starting drama with people and inserting themselves into other people’s business and so the second Trisha Paytas I getting any kind of criticism or backlash then they’re gonna run away and play the victim card!.. (Bellevison, 20210).



Others pointed out that Paytas was very strategic in her vlogs and did not believe she was somehow clueless in relation to the backlash she faced after her transgressive behavior. For example, one YouTuber expressed his thoughts:

...I actually find it really difficult to believe she doesn't know what she is doing. I am not trying to be mean when I say that. I am trying to be observant. It's like she says she wants people to stop talking about her but she is the one that continues to talk about them and situations that perpetuate this kinda stuff [...] so I don't know if you gets caught this. This si something she does a lot. She makes a video saying I stopped talking about them but she is actually talking about them... (Repzilla, 2021).

Additionally, other pointed out that Paytas would often use her mental health issues to justify and thus excuse her behavior. One YouTuber arguing:

...It's really interesting to me that whenever something happens to little miss Trisha Paytas then all of the sudden she cries you know mental illness and she can't take it and leave her alone and even insinuating that she might do something to herself... (Van Luc7, 2021).

#### **4.2.2.3. A desire to disprove Trisha**

In six videos, YouTubers response to Paytas allegations was to conduct their own investigations, instead of merely reporting on what was unfolding. This is not to argue that these channels did not curate a timeline and discussing the scandal. However, this theme was surprising because it appears YouTubers are behaving as online detectives as they appear to be investigating Paytas's entire channel. It demonstrates a mode of vigilantism. This type of strategies is what is known as hounding (Loveluck, 2020). These videos included screenshots and clips all curated from Paytas's social media accounts which were meant to show the audience Paytas was most likely lying about the allegation.

Hounding was aimed at discrediting the story and accusing Paytas of being a pathological liar, with one YouTuber explaining

...this story before is really fucking confusing to me because either there were multiple assaults when they were six or they have a really bad memory because Trisha has brought up the six-year-old story online a lot but here's the thing about it the story changes every time it's told now I'm going to play a bunch of clips for you guys about

this story I'm trying to play him in an order that is not confusing to you guys because it does get really confusing... (MYSTERIOUS, 2021)

Many used clips from MYSTERIOUS video exemplified by this statement:

...It showed Trisha encouraged people to google his name in her school and look what pops up so again i'm gonna take another clip from the amazing mysterious channel where she actually did this googled his name and high school exactly like trisha told people to do and she shows exactly what pops up and you'll be surprised... (Dylan Coleman, 2021).

YouTubers were using MYSTERIOUS videos to enhance awareness and circulate the evidence she had provided to the community.

Many YouTubers also focused on how Paytas romanticized and sexualized about teacher in past vlogs in hopes of proving Paytas story could not be true with one YouTuber illustrating his thoughts on Paytas's past vlogs :

“A really old video from 2014 and it was titled how to seduce your teachers and in this video she talks about Mr Riney very differently to how she talks about him now so things are just getting really confusing because she's talking about him in one way in 2014 then seven years later she's now accusing him of being sexual with her during his class” (Dylan Coleman, 2021).

Thus, YouTubers had compiled evidence to show that Paytas was most likely not telling the truth about this particular occurrence in their live. After doing their own research it seems that whilst many YouTubers wanted to believe Paytas and her allegations there was simply too much evidence that suggested otherwise. For instance, one YouTuber made this clear by arguing :

...if you have a valid reason for doubting someone's story okay sure we can have that conversation I personally am always going to default to believing someone when they come forward about that because essay does happen all the time and false reports of essay are among similar rates to other crimes that are falsely reported aka not very often at all so I'm always going to believe someone but like if there are some very *obvious holes in the story or if the person is very clearly lying about some aspect* of it or if there is like a witness that can back up the person being accused story like you know all of these things okay sure we can have that conversation... [emphasis added]

(Bellelevision, 2021).

#### 4.2.2.4. *Raising awareness*

In nine videos, raising awareness appeared as theme by YouTubers circulating the incriminating evidence within the community. They did so by highlighting a video which served as the catalyst, namely the videos created by MYSTERIOUS. They felt this video was extremely detailed and disproved Paytas’s claims and therefore were highlighting this channel, with one YouTuber explain “you guys need to go watch this video this video does not have as many views as I think it should when I first saw it as I think it should because the detail and precision within the research of this video is insane” (Spill sesh, 2021).

Many YouTubers felt the need to seek out evidence and discuss this scandal due to the severity of these claims. Thus, creating videos about this scandal had the desired outcome of raising awareness within the community. One YouTuber describing her motives “I felt like I had to make a video because this is so extreme” (Spill Sesh, 2021). Another YouTuber explains:

...I cover what I think is the most relevant in these types of situations. I am not always going to cover every little mishap that happens with folks. It has to be something that I think it relatively you know maybe damaging or potentially dangerous or just irresponsible in general... (Repzion, 2021).

### 4.3. Discussion

This analysis conducted a comparative case study analysis of two scandals of Trisha Paytas. A total of five theme thus emerged from the data. The results share similarities and differences which will be expanded on in this section.

**Table 1**

*Themes of both case studies*

DID scandal	Teacher scandal
Denouncing Trisha	Denouncing Trisha
Trolling pays	Establishing a pattern of behavior
A desire to disprove Trisha	A desire to disprove Trisha
Establishing a pattern of behavior	Raising Awareness

### **4.3.1. Denouncing Trisha**

This theme was located in both scandals. However, it is important to note that for the DID scandal the aim seemed to be about reestablishing social control within the YouTube community which was disrupted about offensive content uploaded by Paytas. The offence taking in these scandals were conditioned by the YouTubers' moral concerns and criminal implications (Trottier, 2019). In the first scandal, no actual crime was committed. Paytas had uploaded a vlog which was highly offensive. Therefore, the responses served to augment the visibility of Paytas moral offense. In the second, Paytas allegedly made false allegations regarding a sexual assault claim against multiple teachers and doxed on of them on her social media platforms. This could have led to a defamation lawsuit by the family. Not all social norms (e.g., lying about having a mental health disorder, lying about sexual assault) are covered under the rule of law. YouTubers who see an injustice done against a perceived weak member of society may take it upon themselves to police the perceived transgressions. Furthermore, these denunciations seems to show how YouTubers have a desire to upload justice for the perceived weak. In the case of DID, the mental health community and in the teacher scandal with the deceased teacher and family are being perceived as weaker than Paytas because it appears their reach is not as effective as Paytas who has almost five million subscribers.

This theme falls in line with reflexive shame which is used by a group to impose shame that is meant to elicit reflexivity in the accused (Abidin, 2016). Denouncing Paytas was an attempt to make her reflect on her vlogging practices in which she was stigmatizing a marginalized community in the first, and in the second, doxing a deceased man which was causing his family to be harassed online. Additionally, denouncing draws upon bonds to community in an attempt to maintain social order within Cyberworlds (Wall & Williams, 2007). As Braithwaite (1989) contends, the deterrence if the key to crime reduction – the fear of being humiliated by your peers or being made to feel pains of guilt. Thus, while no official laws have been broken in the both scandals, the consequences of Paytas's vlogs were having real life consequences for those who Paytas was targeting. However, laws which have been broken are those generated by YouTube which will be discussed in the third theme. Interestingly, none of the YouTubers discussed this fact which could be understood as an implicit awareness that nothing will be done in relation to Paytas's video.

### **4.3.2. Trolling pays**

This theme was emerged strongly in the DID scandal, and was only mentioned twice during the teacher scandal and was therefore not included. Perhaps, the lack of mentioning this theme in the latter is due to the severity of the claims of the second scandal. However, it appears that the drama community is very much aware of these clickbait strategies and are pointing them out to their audience explicitly. Various YouTubers zoomed in on Paytas's thumbnails to point out how they are overtly sexual and exaggerated. This was especially the case for the DID scandal in which according to some YouTubers was utilizing clickbait which for them was not only inauthentic vlogging, but misleading the viewers.

Furthermore, Paytas can be understood as a shamelebrity because YouTubers were labeling Trisha based on her behavior which they called trolling. According to McIntosh and Pavlik (2011), the act of trolling refers to “the practice of posting deliberately obnoxious or disruptive messages to discussion groups or other online forums simply to get a reaction from the participants” (p. 215). In addition, a “troll” is, “a person who purposely vandalizes Wikipedia entries by inserting false or nonsensical information” (p. 266). These definitions have merged together to define a troll or act of trolling to mean both – someone who is acting obnoxiously or posting false information in an effort to antagonize other people. With Paytas in both scandals, it appears that YouTubers are aware of her trolling activities. The DID scandal appears to have been understood as an act of trolling in that Paytas was spreading misinformation about a serious topic in hopes it would antagonize the YouTube community enough to get her views and attention. Generating negative affect which within the value of attention drives the monetization potential not only of social media platforms but also of individual posters (Berryman & Kavka, 2018). Thus, economic formula can be understood as one ‘troll’ unit (from the producer) will generate one attention unit (from the user), which will in turn produce a monetary unit (for the producer and the platform) (Berryman & Kavka, 2018). Moreover, Berryman and Kavka (2018) argue that negative affect vlogs are no less attention-grabbing than their positive counterparts with the conditions sustaining their circulation differing dramatically. This can be argued for acts of trolling as well as they are very attention-grabbing which can be illustrated by the views they generate.

According to Abidin (2016), individuals who actively seek out negative attention utilize shame which is continuously curated and channeled as a deliberate marketing strategy. Paytas appears to use acts of trolling which in turn generate shame which in essence is generating her a lot of views and attention. Something which the YouTube community appears to be aware of. Grabbing attention online implies having high visibility as well as the highly valued ability to “command an audience” (Marwick, 2013, p. 77). Thus, YouTubers

show that Paytas has the ability to command an audience by the sheer fact that it generates her videos views and attention complimented by additional attention from other communities on the platform.

#### **4.3.3. Establishing a pattern of behavior**

This theme emerged in both scandals in which YouTubers were curating digital evidence that would show that Paytas was a troll and could therefore not be trusted as an authentic vlogger. Screenshots and clips were often included in this theme to strengthen their claims. Lawson (2021) argues that screenshots constitute a way for users to work around the ephemerality and mutability of platform content to preserve evidence and permit drama channels to better respond to scandals. The aim of curating a shamelebrity is to discredit Paytas and therefore can be understood as a form of hounding which emerges in the following theme as well. By establishing a pattern of behavior, YouTubers are attempting to show that you cannot trust Paytas because she has been a troll ever since she first uploaded to the platform. These videos also damages her reputation as a vlogger because the audience cannot trust she is being authentic about the things she says her in vlogs. Trust and believing a person's word are the foundation for social order (Nunes, 2021). Solove (2007) argues that reputation plays an important role in social control. Therefore, reputation offers a strong incentive for people to conform to social norms by making them responsible for their own actions (Nunes, 2007). Paytas was being scrutinized by these YouTubers through her reputation in an effort to regain social order within the YouTube community. Furthermore, this scandal helps in understanding how participation in this self-constituted YouTube community relies on forms of vernacular expertise as well as understanding the attention economy and the affordances of the site with the ability to clearly navigate the social and cultural norms of the community.

Furthermore, this could be understood as a form of social media surveillance. Surveillance in society involves the collection, storage, processing and assessment of data about humans or groups of humans by an actor in order to advance the latter's goals by violence exerted with the help of the collected information (Trottier, & Fuchs, 2015). Surveillance on social media is made easy. Social media profiles can be understood as a historical accumulation and storage of online behavior (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015). As such, it can be argued that Paytas is being surveilled by the drama and commentary community and her vlogs and other social media are being collected and storage in order to expose her for being a shamelebrity.

For the second scandal, YouTubers pointed to Paytas's use of weaponized shame in

that she actively generates apology videos in which she shifts blame. The shame is directed outwards toward an external other (Abidin, 2016), in this case the YouTube community and is utilized in an attempt to gain more sympathy and followers. Paytas would react to the criticism and shame others within the community for not believing her claims. YouTubers thus showed that Paytas was a shamelebrity that would routinely spark controversies which would lead to scandal and in turn would lead to shaming practices (on both sides) which generated her views and attention.

#### **4.3.4. Trying to disprove Trish**

For the second theme represents the epitomy of digital vigilantism (Loveluck, 2020). Specifically, the first sub theme hounding in which YouTubers seemingly turn into online detectives. The aim for these YouTubers is to accuse Paytas of being a pathological liar and discredit her reputation by providing incriminating evidence. By conducting so-called deep-dives as these YouTubers describe this genre, they can be understood as YouTube web sleuths. Websleuthing is the embodiment of participatory media, where the lines between the producer, consumer and subject are blurred, there are fewer restrictions in relation to time and space and online activities have real world, embodied consequences (Yardley, 2016). According to Yardely et al., (2016), web sleuths are more than vigilantes because they adapt, adopt and create online spaces as places to gather, engage in discussion, conduct research, build, case repositories and host content.

Furthermore, this theme can be understood as crowdsourcing for justice where justice-seeking YouTubers have collectively pooled their expertise in response to a real and perceive societal wrong. This strategy in response to Trisha lies can be understood as mediated policing in which these YouTubers deliberately sought out actionable content which would damage Paytas's reputation (Trottier, 2020). According to Trottier, "a key dimension of mediated policing, vigilance entails a willingness to scrutinize social(ly mediated) life, and to act on offending events if they occur" (p. 204). This vigilance can be applied to Paytas who had now established a reputation of being a troll so that any and all statements she was making on her social media accounts were being closely monitored by the YouTube community. Moreover, hounding these statements for accuracy was a new pattern of behavior being exhibited by drama and commentary channels. The evidence presented in their videos was immensely detailed which implies that they took a lot of time investigating the claims made by Paytas. This was especially the case for the second scandal as the severity of Paytas trolling had taking on a new dimension which was lying about criminal acts. It appears the

hounding is therefore the results of deliberately wanting to retaliate against Paytas because the legal channels are uncertain (Loveluck, 2020).

#### **4.3.5. Raising awareness**

This theme emerged in the second scandal mainly in the form of sharing the MYSTERIOUS investigative video to spread awareness. It appears YouTubers were driven by informal justice for the teacher accused and thus requested their audiences go watch the video. Furthermore, raising awareness was prompted by the severity of this scandal. They also operate alone – often with a view to investigating a specific crime which has affected them as victims or secondary victims. This theme illustrates how social media itself is used a tool to advocate for justice. According Carney (2016), social media platform serve as a counter public in which people formulate opinions that puts pressure on the state to reform its practices by raising awareness. In this case, it could be argued YouTubers are attempting to raise awareness about the dangers of trolls who take it too far. According to Burgess et al. (2020), vlogging can be understood as a form of activism in which YouTubers visibly put a huge effort inot shaping, contesting and negotiating the emergent cultur of YouTube’s social norms.

Moreover, it could also be a way to pressure YouTube into reprimanding Paytas for making such false allegations (allegedly). As a tool, people who are like-minded on social media platforms can easily come together, raise awareness and thus facilitate collective action to change society or social problems (Chon, 2020). While, the YouTubers tread lightly on this subject, it appears they raise awareness about how seeking views and attention can push individuals to immoral limits in which they have no boundaries on what they will do or say to gain attention online.



## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to better understand cancel culture on YouTube. Interestingly, this thesis has shown that the popularity of cancel culture in the negotiations of the drama community appears to have died down. In other words, cancel practices are still occurring, however, using the particular terminology was not prevalent in the data. However, as has been shown in the second chapter, cancel culture and digital vigilantism share many similarities. The practices such as public shaming and websleuthing (by searching for and exposing a person with receipts) occur in both theories.

The following research question was posed :

*How do content creators from the drama and commentary community on YouTube negotiate the controversial content by Trisha Paytas?*

Five themes emerged in total. Four themes emerged per scandal. The responses toward the scandal were negative and provoked a lot of negative attention by the drama community. Furthermore, YouTubers engaged in more complex practices than merely reacting toward what they perceived to be a breaking of social norms on the platform. Thorough investigations into Trisha Paytas's vlogs on YouTube were conducted and this ultimately exposed her as a shamelebrity who strategically used shame to gain negative attention.

Moreover, what was interesting in the comparative analysis between Paytas's two last scandals was the intensification of modes of vigilantism. In the first scandal, outrage and a desire to disprove Paytas claims where the results of a desire to seek social control toward the target who had uploaded offensive content which the drama community felt was morally out of line. In essence, they felt Paytas had gone too far because she was stigmatizing and making a mockery of an already marginalized community who was often not taken seriously by society.

The final scandal shows that Paytas had once again found ways to cross the boundaries. This time taking on criminal allegations in hopes of garnering sympathy from the audience. However, various YouTubers took it upon themselves to investigate these allegations, perhaps due to the fact that they felt Paytas often lied about certain subjects to gain attention. This led to a new type of video in which YouTubers were acting as online detectives trying to solve the case of whether or not the teacher Paytas's had doxed on the *Frenemies* podcast were in fact truthful. They came to the conclusion that Paytas had lied about these allegations and provided extensive amounts of evidence to prove their point. Thus, the community has shifted to merely

narrating scandals on YouTubers to their being dedicated channels doing digital investigative work in order to maintain both social control (i.e. the DID scandal) and crime control (i.e. the teacher scandal).

These modes of vigilantism such as mediated denouncing and hounding produced visibility which was intense (content like blog posts, photos, screenshots and video evidence can circulate to thousands or even millions of users within a few days) and enduring (the discovery of Paytas being a shamelebrity may be the first item to appear when searching the individual's name, and may become a cultural reference in its own right) (Trottier, 2017). As previously described briefly, the efforts of these YouTubers appear to have been successful in re-establishing order and putting an end to Paytas's shamelebrity practices. After, Paytas was exposed by the drama community she turned to more positive vlogging practices such as doing Dhar Mann style videos, in which she does a skit about a moral topic (for instance, you should not judge a book by its cover). Paytas also ventured into the ASMR community and has started a new family vlog as she is expecting her first child this year. Thus, the conclusion of the responses towards Paytas in 2021 can be understood as being highly successful in maintaining social control over those taking it too far.

Lastly, while denouncing Trisha Paytas mimics cancel practices what was surprising was the lack of withdraw of support as an emergent theme in the data. There were only a total of five videos would discussed cancel culture and only three videos which made explicit calls to withdraw support, meaning they were no longer going to view Paytas's content. This inspired the title of this thesis as it appears that cancel culture appears to have lost traction with YouTubers mainly focusing on providing incriminating evidence and sharing their reactions which consisted of shaming practices, thus making digital vigilantism a stronger framework to analysis these scandals.

### **5.1. Limitations**

This researched faced some limitations caused by certain elements. Firstly, only 33 videos were analyzed for this research, while there were a lot of diverse videos discussing the selected scandals. Therefore, it is likely that there are videos that contain data relevant to this study that have not been selected for examination.

Moreover, the qualitative content analysis utilized means that the research was done according to the researcher's personal interpretation and perceptions. This would make generalizability difficult but could be improved by the very acknowledgement that the researcher is not completely objective and should aim to being open to other interpretations (Van Gorp,

2010). Despite trying to be as objective as possible, I could not help but feel slightly outraged after watching the videos exposing Paytas. However, I tried to remain objective and this feeling of outrage subsided as time went by. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct additional research on both shamelebrity practices and digital vigilantism in order to strengthen the reliability of the coding.

## **5.2. Future research**

Future research can be done on both celebrity studies and surveillance studies. Firstly, little research has been done on shamelebrity who actively seek out negative attention to generate a name for themselves. This research has filled this gap slightly by researching a notorious shamelebrity on YouTube. Secondly, peer-to-peer surveillance on social media platforms seem relatively limited and here to the aim was to fill this gap with this study. Future research could for instance focus on what practices are implemented in order to maintain an established order.

Another important limitations to point to and one echoed by Abidin (2019) in that the focus was on a microcelebrity from North America. This research hopes to encourage a more diverse range of case study subject from various countries and continents. This research did a comparative case study of scandals focusing on the same microcelebrity. Therefore, future research might do a comparative case study examining two different shamelebrities from two different geographical locations.

## References

- Abidin, C. (2016). Please subscribe!: influencers, social media, and the commodification of everyday life [Doctoral dissertation, University of Western Australia]. UWA Campus Repository. <https://doi.org/10.26182/5ddc899d698cb>
- Andrejevic, M. (2009). Exploiting YouTube: Contradictions of user-generated labor. In P. Snickars & P. Vonderau (Eds.), *The YouTube reader* (pp. 406–423). National Library of Sweden.
- Arthurs, J., Drakopoulou, S., & Gandini, A. (2018). Researching YouTube. *Convergence : The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 24(1), 3-15. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1354856517737222>
- Benkler, Yochai. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press.
- Berryman, R., & Kavka, M. (2018). Crying on YouTube: Vlogs, self-exposure and the productivity of negative affect. *Convergence*, 24(1), 85–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517736981>
- Boeije, H. (2012). *Analysis in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks. Sage Publications.
- Bouvier, G. (2020). Racist call-outs and cancel culture on Twitter: The limitations of the platform's ability to define issues of social justice. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 38, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100431>
- boyd, d., 2011. Social Network Sites as Networked Publics. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self* (pp. 39-58). Routledge.
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge University Press
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bromwich, J. (Host). (2020, August 10). Cancel culture, Part 1 : Where it came from (No. 1) [Audio podcast]. In *The Daily*. New York Times. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/cancel-culture-part-1-where-it-came-from/id1200361736?i=1000487664820>
- Burgess J.E. (2012). YouTube and the formalisation of amateur media. In D. Hunter, R. Lobato, J. Thomas & M. Richardson (Eds.), *Amateur media: Social, cultural and legal perspectives* (pp. 53-58). Routledge.
- Burgess, J. (2012). YouTube and the formalisation of amateur media. In D. Hunter, R. Lobato, J. Thomas, & M. Richardson (Eds.), *Amateur media: Social, cultural and legal perspectives* (pp. 53-58). Routledge.

- Burgess, J., & Green, B. (2008, October). Agency and controversy in the YouTube community. In IR 9.0: Rethinking Communities, Rethinking Place - Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). YouTube: Online video and participatory culture (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Polity Press.
- Burgess, J., Green, J., & Rebane, G. (2020). Agency and controversy in the YouTube community. In H. Friese, M. Nolden, G. Rebane & Schreier, M. (Eds.), *Handbuch Soziale Praktiken und Digitale Alltagswelten* (pp. 105-116). Springer.
- Carney, N. (2016). All lives matter, but so does race: Black lives matter and the evolving role of social media. *Humanity & Society*, 40(2), 180–199.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597616643868>
- Carpenter, J., William, B., Crockett, M., Weber, R., & Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2021). Political polarization and moral outrage on social media. *Connecticut Law Review*, 52(2), 1107-1120. [https://opencommons.uconn.edu/law\\_review/454](https://opencommons.uconn.edu/law_review/454)
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Polity.
- Chon, M.-G., & Park, H. (2020). Social media activism in the digital age: Testing an integrative model of activism on contentious issues. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 97(1), 72–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019835896>
- Christin, A., & Lewis, R. (2021). The Drama of Metrics: Status, Spectacle, and Resistance Among YouTube Drama Creators. *Social Media & Society*, 1-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121999660>
- Clark, D. M. (2020). Drag them : A brief etymology of so-called “cancel culture”. *Communication and the Public*, 5(3-4), 88-92. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/2057047320961562>
- Clickbait. (2018). Definition of Clickbait. In Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clickbait>
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (2021). *Creator Culture : An introduction to global social media entertainment*. New York University Press.
- Davenport, T., & Beck., J. (2001). *The attention economy: Understanding the new currency of business*. Harvard Business School Press.
- De Oliveira Nunes, N. (2022). Cancel culture : The scarlet letter in Gabriela Pugliesi’s case. *Brazilian Creative Industries*, 2(1), 57-70. <https://doi.org/10.25112/bcij.v2i1.2878>

- Dodgson, L. (2019, September 28). YouTubers are calling out the platform's "cancel culture" that subjects them to a rampant hate mob and sees them lose thousands of subscribers in a matter of hours. *Insider*. <https://www.insider.com/cancel-culture-what-it-means-creators-on-youtube2019-9>
- Frey, B. (2018). *The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation*. Sage publications.
- Fuchs, C., & Trottier, D. (2015). Towards a theoretical model of social media surveillance in contemporary society. *Communications : The European Journal of Communication Research*, 40(1), 113-135. <https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2014-0029>
- Gamson, J. (2011). The unwatched life is not worth living: The elevation of the ordinary in celebrity culture. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 126(4), 1061-1069. <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2011.126.4.1061>
- García-Rapp, F. (2017). Popularity markers on YouTube's attention economy: the case of Bubzbeauty. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 228-245. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1242430>
- Gilbert, N. (2008). *Researching Social life*. Sage publications.
- Goldhaber, M. H. (1997). The attention economy and the net. *First Monday*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v2i4.519>
- Hill, S. R., & Troshani, I. D. (2017). Chandrasekar Signalling effects of vlogger popularity on online consumers. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 60(1), 76-82. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/08874417.2017.1400929>
- Hillrichs, R. (2016). From the bedroom to LA: Revisiting the settings of early video blogs. *Necus*, 5 December. Available at: [www.necus-ejms.org/from-the-bedroom-to-la-revisiting-the-settings-of-early-video-blogs-on-youtube/](http://www.necus-ejms.org/from-the-bedroom-to-la-revisiting-the-settings-of-early-video-blogs-on-youtube/) (accessed 29 July 2017).
- Hills, C. M. (2018, February 13). YouTube won't ban Logan Paul, but here's what is can do. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/meganhills1/2018/02/13/logan-paul-punishment/?sh=6ca457dc3dbc>
- Himma-Kadakas, M., Rajavee, A., Orgmets, M. L., Eensaar, L., & Kõuts-Klemm, R. (2018). The food chain of YouTubers: engaging audiences with formats and genres. *Observatorio*, 12, 54-75.
- Hou, Y., Jiang, T., & Wang, Q. (2017). Socioeconomic status and online shaming: The mediating role of belief in a just world. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 76, 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.07.003>
- Huang, Q., Gabdulhakov, R., & Trottier, D. (2020). Online scrutiny of people with nice cars:

- A comparative analysis of Chinese, Russian, and Anglo-American outrage. *Global Media and China*, 5(3), 247–260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436420901818>
- Jerslev, A. (2014). Celebrification, authenticity, gossip. *Nordicom Review*, 35(1), 171-186. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2014-0111>
- Johnston, L. (1996). What is vigilantism? *British Journal of Criminology*, 36(2), 220-236. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjc.a014083>
- Kitzmann, A. (2003). That different place: Documenting the self within online environments. *Biography*, 26(1), 48–65. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23540387>
- Lawson, E. C. (2020). Skin deep : Callout strategies, influencers, and racism in the online beauty community. *New Media & Society*, 23(3), 596-612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820904697>
- Lee, E. J. & Watkins, B. (2016). YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions and intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5753-5760. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.171>
- Lewis, R., & Christin, A. (2022, January 18). Platform Drama: ‘Cancel Culture,’ Celebrity, and the Struggle for Accountability on YouTube. *New Media & Society*, <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/zpukg>
- Linton, I. (2020). ‘I don’t think that’s very funny’: Scrutiny of comedy in the digital age. In D. Trottier, R. Gabdulhakov, & Q. Huang (Eds.), *Introducing vigilant audiences* (pp. 77-106). Open Book Publishers.
- Loveluck, B. (2020). The many shades of digital vigilantism. A typology of online self-justice. *Global Crime*, 21(3-4), 213-241. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/17440572.2019.1614444>
- Lull, J. & Hinerman, S. (1997). *Media scandals : Morality and desire in the popular culture marketplace*. Polity Press.
- Macdonald, K. (2008). Using documents. In Gilbert, N. (Eds.), *Researching Social life* (pp. 285-303). Sage publications.
- Madden, M. (2007). Online video. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2007/07/25/online-video/>
- Margolis, E. (1990). Visual ethnography: ‘Tools for mapping the AIDS epidemic’. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19(3), 370-91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124190019003006>
- Marshall, D. (2006). *The celebrity culture reader*. Routledge.
- Marwick, A. (2013). *Status update*. Yale University Press.

- Marwick, A. (2015). Instafame: Luxury selfies in the attention economy. *Public Culture* 27(1), 137–160. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1215/08992363-2798379>
- Marwick, A. (2015). You may know me from YouTube : (Micro-)Celebrity in social media. In D. Marshall & S. Redmond (Eds.), *A companion to Celebrity* (pp. 335-350). John Wiley & Sons.
- Marwick, E., & boyd, d. (2011). To see and be seen: Celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence*, 17(2), 139–158. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1354856510394539>
- Marx, G.T. (2013). The public as partner? Technology can make us auxiliaries as well as vigilantes. *IEEE Security & Privacy*, 11(5), 56-61. <https://ieeexplore-ieee-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/document/6630028>
- McIntosh, S., & Pavlik, J. V. (2011). *Converging Media: A New Introduction to Mass*. Oxford University Press.
- Mortensen, M. & Kristensen, N. N. (2020). De-celebrification : beyond the scandalous. *Celebrity Studies*, 11(1), 89-100. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/19392397.2020.1704385>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education*, 14(3), e67670. <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Ng, E. (2020). No grand pronouncements Here...: Reflections on cancel culture and digital media participation. *Television & New Media*, 22(6), 621-627. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1527476420918828>
- Ng, E. (2022). *Cancel culture : A critical analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Prins, C. (2010). The Online Dimension of Recognized Victim’s Rights. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 26, 219-221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2010.01.005>
- Quinn, K. (2021, May 13). Ellen DeGeneres is ending her talk show, but was she really cancelled? *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/tv-and-radio/ellen-degeneres-is-ending-her-talk-show-but-was-she-really-cancelled-20210513-p57rpp.html>
- Ruggiero, E. T. (2009). Uses and gratifications theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Mass Communication and Society*, 3(1), 3-37. [https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301\\_02](https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1207/S15327825MCS0301_02)



- S. Zannettou, S. Chatzis, K. Papadamou, & M. Sirivianos. (2018). The Good, the Bad and the Bait: Detecting and Characterizing Clickbait on YouTube. Paper presented at the - 2018 IEEE Security and Privacy Workshops (SPW), 63-69. <https://ieeexplore-ieee.org/ur/document/8424634>.
- Sailofsky, D. (2021). Masculinity, cancel culture and woke capitalism: Exploring Twitter response to Brendan Leipsic's leaked conversation. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902211039768>
- Sanders, M., & Tsay-Vogel, M. (2015). Beyond heroes and villains: Examining explanatory mechanisms underlying moral disengagement. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(3), 236-238. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1096944>
- Senft, T. (2008) *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. Peter Lang.
- Senft, T. (2013). Microcelebrity and the branded self. In J. Hartley, J. Burgess, & A. Bruns (Eds.), *A Companion to New Media Dynamics* (pp. 346-354). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Silverman, D. (2011). Credible Qualitative Research. In *Interpreting Qualitative Data. A Guide to the Principles of Qualitative Research* (4th edition). Sage publication.
- Smallridge, J., Wagner, P., & Crowl, N. J. (2016). Understanding cyber-vigilantism: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology*, 8(1), 57-70. <http://www.jtpcrim.org/2016February/Smallridge.pdf>
- Social Blade YouTube Stats (2022). *blndsundoll4mj*. <https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/blndsundoll4mj/monthly>
- Solove, D. (2007). *The future of reputation : Gossip, rumor and privacy on the Internet*. Yale University Press.
- Strangelove, M. (2010). *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary videos by ordinary people*. University of Toronto Press.
- Strangelove, M. (2020). *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary videos by ordinary people*. University of Toronto Press.
- Stuart, K. (2017). Rosie and Rosie: We don't really have a filter. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2017/apr/18/rose-and-rosie-youtube-stars-interview-rose-ellen-dix-rosie-spaughton> (accessed 31 July 2017).
- Trottier, D. (2014). Big Data Ambivalence: Visions and Risks in Practice. In M. Hand & S. Hillyard (Eds.), *Big Data? Qualitative Approaches to Digital Research, Studies in Qualitative Methodology* (pp. 51-72). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI: 10.1108/S1042-319220140000013004

- Trottier, D. (2017). Digital vigilantism as weaponized visibility. *Philosophy & Technology*, 30, 55-72. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4>
- Trottier, D. (2017). Digital vigilantism as weaponized visibility. *Philosophy & Technology*, 30, 55-72. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4>
- Trottier, D. (2020). Confronting the digital mob: Press coverage of online justice seeking. *European Journal of Communication*, 0(0), 1-16. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0267323120928234>
- Trottier, D. (2020). Denunciation and doxing: towards a conceptual model of digital vigilantism. *Global Crime*, 21(3-4), 196-212. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2019.1591952>
- Vadde, N. R., Gupta, P., Mehta, P., Gupta, P., & Vikranth, BM. (2020). Analysis of YouTube videos: Detecting click bait on YouTube. *International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Science*, 4(6), 15-17. <http://ijses.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/95-IJSES-V4N5.pdf>
- Varshney, D., & Vishwakarma, K. D. (2021). A unified approach for detection of Clickbait videos on YouTube using cognitive evidences. *Applied Intelligence*, 51, 4214–4235. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10489-020-02057-9>
- Von Hippel, E. (2005). *Democratizing innovation*. The MIT Press.
- Wall, D. & Willams, W. (2007). Policing diversity in the digital age: Maintaing order in virtual communities. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 7(4), 391-415. DOI: 10.1177/1748895807082064
- Wall, D. S. & Williams, M. (2007). Policing diversity in the digital age: Maintaining order in virtual communities. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 7, 391-415. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1748895807082064>
- Werner, A. E. (2012). *Rants, reactions, and other rhetorics : Genres of the YouTube vlog* [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina]. Proquest Dissertations and These database.
- Wernick, A. (1992). *Promotional culture, advertising, ideology and symbolic expression*. Sage Publications.
- Wernick, A. (1992). *Promotional culture, advertising, ideology and symbolic expression*.
- Williamson, K., Given, L. M., & Scifleet, P. (2018). Qualitative data analysis. In K. Williamson, & G. Johanson (Eds.), *Research Methods: Information, Systems and Contexts* (pp. 45-476). Elsevier.
- Williamson, K., Given, L. M., & Scifleet, P. (2018). Qualitative data analysis. In K.

- Williamson, & G. Johanson (Eds.), *Research Methods: Information, Systems and Contexts* (pp. 45-476). Elsevier.
- Yardley, E., Lynes, A. G. T., Wilson, D., & Kelly, E. (2018). What's the deal with 'websleuthing'? News media representations of amateur detectives in networked spaces. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 14(1), 81–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659016674045>
- Yip, Y. F. (2019). The dynamics of online shaming: A sociological study of Hong Kong's virtual world [Master thesis, University of Hong Kong]. Lignan Theses and Dissertations. <https://commons.ln.edu.hk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1068&context=otd>
- YouTube (2022). *Spam, deceptive practices, & scams policies*. [https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801973?hl=en&ref\\_topic=9282365](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2801973?hl=en&ref_topic=9282365)
- Zulli, D. (2018). Capitalizing on the look: insights into the glance, attention economy, and Instagram. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 35(2), 137-150. <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/15295036.2017.1394582>

## Appendix A

*Period : 2020 - 2021*

	<b>YouTuber</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.	Bellevisio	28 November 2020	How Trisha Paytas Exploited Her Way To Fame
2.	Curtis Price	3 April 2020	Trisha Paytas' Newest Scandal Ruined the Lives of Thousands
3.	Spill Sesh	14 March 2020	TRISHA PAYTAS REALLY MESSED UP
4.	Shadespill	20 Mar 2020	everything WRONG with trisha paytas..
5.	Van Luc	5 Jun 2020	Trisha Paytas My Alters Switch (Caught On Camera) Video Response
6.	Young Dumb Honey Bun	6 Jun 2020	Who is Trisha Paytas ?
7.	MARKIE	6 May 2020	The END Of Trisha Paytas
8.	Sixteenleo	30 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas (And Her "Alters") Are Hypocrites
9.	helloleesh	18 Mar 2020	GIRL, BYE.   I Am Done With Trisha Paytas. (PLEASE READ PIN/DESCRIPTION.)
10.	VangelinaSkov	19 Apr 2020	Trisha Paytas Admitted She DOESN'T Have DID (DissociaDID/Anthony Padilla Drama)
11.	Kristina Maione	18 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas pissed off the WRONG community... this is BAD
12.	hot tea	19 Mar 2020	I'm so done with trisha paytas
13.	Repzilla	18 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas Hurts "Another" ENTIRE Community...
14.	Def Noodles	14 Jul 2020	TRISHA PAYTAS MUST BE STOPPED
15.	ImAllexx	25 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas awful mental health video
16.	TheLyfeofaFreeSpirit	12 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas STIGMATIZED mental health AGAIN! *RECEIPTS*
17.	Tipster	12 Apr 2020	Trisha Paytas is Exploiting Mental Health for Views!!!
18.	Opioninated	14 Mar 2020	Trisha Paytas Strikes Again...

*Period : 2021 - 2022*

	<b>YouTuber</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.	Repzilla	17 Sept 2021	Trisha Paytas: The Worst Response To EVERYTHING
2.	Bellevisio	23 Sept 2021	The Trisha Paytas Redemption Arc Is Over

3.	Repzion	24 Dec 2021	The Trisha Paytas Files   Ep. 1
4.	Cruel World Happy Mind	22 Nov 2021	Trisha Paytas: YouTube's BIGGEST LIAR...
5.	MYSTERIOUS	4 Aug 2021	Trisha Paytas BEFORE The Fame    The DARK Side of Trisha Paytas EP: 1 Part 2
6.	Dylan Coleman	13 Sept 2021	Trisha Paytas' pathological LIES during Frenemies uncovered by YouTuber (Disturbing)
7.	Van Luc	17 Jun 2021	Trisha Paytas Just Revealed This..... Receipts included
8.	Colbie u	9 Mar 2021	Toxic Trisha Paytas
9.	Drama Investigator	22 Sept 2021	Trisha Paytas EXPOSED By Former Classmates For Lying?!
10.	Adam McIntyre	13 Sept 2021	Trisha Paytas BREAKDOWN Over Ethan Klein...
11.	Spill Plug	22 Oct 2021	How Trisha Paytas DESTROYED Her Career
12.	hot tea	14 Sept 2021	trisha paytas isn't doing too well (mental breakdown)
13.	Spill sesh	14 Sept 2021	TRISHA PAYTAS BREAKS DOWN AND BLAMES ETHAN KLEIN
14.	Angelika Oles	30 Sept 2021	Trisha Paytas EXPOSED by this channel... it's BAD!
15.	VangelinaSkov	13 Sept 2021	The Trisha Paytas vs Ethan Klein Feud is Getting MESSY (& the Moses situation)

## Appendix B

### DID scandal

Channel	Title	URL
AnthonyPadilla	I spent a day with MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES (Dissociative Identity Disorder)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek7JK6pattE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ek7JK6pattE</a>
Drama Reuploaded	MEET MY ALTERS   Dissociative Identity Disorder (Trisha Paytas Reuploaded)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCjibTYlJpQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCjibTYlJpQ</a>
Gabriela Cid	Trisha Paytas "Dear Anthony" ut with out giving her views	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-sM7TfNGe0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-sM7TfNGe0</a>
Gabriela Cid	Trisha Paytas "switch". Please dont give her the views.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wvdDBnpmZs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wvdDBnpmZs</a>

### Teacher scandal

Channel	Title	URL
Lain Wired	[Audio Only] Frenemies #17 Trisha Was Bullied and It's NOT Okay! (Private listed episode)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKt7Z3s6FFs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKt7Z3s6FFs</a>
Marva John	Trisha Paytas Mental Breakdown	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTaX0A_i4XA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTaX0A_i4XA</a>