

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The number of internet users worldwide is multiplying from year to year. The report published by We Are Social and Hootsuite on January, 30th 2020, stated that internet users worldwide are increasing around 7 percent or 4.54 billion people, and 3.80 billion of them are also social media users or growing about 321 million. According to Similarweb rank based on total global website traffic, YouTube became the number two world's most visited websites with an average per visit of about 23 minutes. Internet users do several activities; 90 percent of them watch online videos, 51 percent watch vlogs, and 70 percent listen to music streaming services (Kemp 2020). Therefore, the increasing number of internet users worldwide will support this research significance since it has proximity to the era of digitalization where we live now.

With the growing number of internet users each year, various mobile devices or gadgets applications will also develop. Several typical online mobile applications are categorized as education, games, dating, communication, social, and entertainment. During the pandemic, people have to isolate themselves at home and indirectly escalate their screen time in total to scrolling through social media. As stated by Hootsuite in July 2020, more than half of the population (51%) in the world, or approximately 3.96 billion people, are actively using social media these days (Hootsuite 2021). Several social media such as YouTube, TikTok, and other

video streaming social media platforms can entertain users by watching the contents posted by creators.

First launched in April 2005 with the private beta version and officially launched for the public in December 2005, YouTube nowadays is very much developed after 16 years of journey. YouTube was built by three co-founders named Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim as a video-dating profile upload platform which has little recognition that makes them enable the updated version of YouTube that allows the public to share any kind of videos and can be watched by many people around the world. The fact that the first video uploaded on YouTube is only 18 seconds long makes the difference for app development between now and then. The development and the releasing app to the public improved after several collaborations with many parties that needed this kind of technology to increase their recognition of their products, such as traditional media companies that wanted to expand their technology to catch the digitalization era airing their program on YouTube. This is then drawing investors to invest in YouTube as it has a bright future in the digital age (Leskin 2020).

As time goes on, YouTube can produce their celebrity as there will always be at least one video that becomes viral and has millions of viewers. YouTube then made a lot of improvement. This social networking platform allowed users to connect by releasing a five-stars rating system, allowing users to leave comments on the videos, creating 'groups' for users, and allowing users to personalize their profile. Those improvements were made in a year in 2006, which ended up on

Google acquiring YouTube for \$1.65 billion at the time (McFadden 2020). YouTube's improvements above are just a few things on the first years of their launch that are seen potentially by the investor, and it is impacting on the internet celebrity production since it also has the feature which allows creators to get paid by the ads on their videos posted on their channel.

Due to the surge of social network users, it is possible to create an emergence to make somebody a celebrity by their video content. Being a celebrity is not an exclusive thing since many celebrities nowadays have their platform to be known. According to Rojek, celebrity is created by the interference of the public generating social construction to manage the image of the celebrity itself. We can also find social construction on how people should act on those platforms in the social network or social media. The process of reconstructing identity from an ordinary person to a celebrity is called *celebrification* (Rojek 2001). One of the ways is building self-branding. Nowadays, self-branding is a usual thing done by people on the internet to differentiate a self for several reasons such as to increase self-confidence since it has its characteristics, upgrade the value of a person's credibility, widen a person's connection with people that has similar potential, and having a focus audience which takes an interest in the branding build by a person that will develop the popularity of a person.

Usually, social media will give an official sign on their account for celebrities admitted as real people who work in the entertainment industry. Thus, they officially have their verification badges. For YouTube, a content creator or

Youtuber can apply for channel verification once their channel has 100.000 subscribers. Many Youtubers or YouTube content creators have their official sign for their verified channel as they have large amounts of subscribers. Felix Kjellberg or PewDiePie once owned the most subscribed channel globally with 108 million subscribers, famous for his gaming videos and reaction videos of viral videos or internet memes. Other than PewDiePie, T-Series now has 168 million subscribers has changed the position of the world's most subscribed channel on YouTube as film production and a record label company from India. Youtuber MrBeast or Jimmy Donaldson who famous for stunts and humor videos is number two of The Highest-paid YouTube Stars of 2020 according to Forbes by earnings \$24 million and 3 billion total views on his channel. Meanwhile, Ryan Kaji from Ryan World's is number one by earning \$29.5 million and 41.7 million subscribers. (Berg and Brown 2020). Furthermore, the rank of The Highest-paid YouTube Stars was also updated by Forbes in 2021. Here, MrBeast managed to occupy the first position by earning \$54 million and having nearly 90 million subscribers, while Ryan Kaji down to rank 7, and the second place was replaced by Jake Paul (Brown and Freeman 2022). All the Youtubers above are only a few examples of how YouTube generates celebrities without seeing the creator's genre.

Theresa Senft stated "micro-celebrity" is a technique to increase the popularities that involve people using video, blogs, and other social networking platforms. It also involves followers and friends as a fan base and managing self-image to be easily consumed by others to reach the goals of popularity (Marwick and Boyd 2011). According to Graeme Turner, the process of a person who

constructs their persona by personal website, blogs, and social media to reach the goals as famous as a celebrity is called "DIY celebrity" (Turner 2014). The phenomenon above is only a few examples of the practice of micro-celebrity, especially on YouTube. Most content creators on YouTube will brand their image by making and sharing content related to the personality they brought to this platform because the forms of YouTube are designed to entertain its user than other social media without setting aside the feature of interaction.

The micro-celebrity and DIY celebrity products are also found on other social media with similar forms like YouTube, such as TikTok. For example, @daviddobrik is one of the verified content creators on TikTok, a successful YouTuber. He has branded himself as a content creator who posted funny videos and charity to other TikTokers. Having 25.1 million followers, he usually posted about one to three videos daily. He also interacts with his fans by dueting their videos and also stays connected with them via Twitch live stream. Following the trends, @daviddobrik was a successful YouTuber that expanded its popularity to TikTok since this platform is new and has increasing numbers of users in only two years. This is likely to show how social media platforms connect to generate celebrity platforms.

TikTok has a TikTok Ads Manager feature, allowing users to access global audiences, ad creation, insight reports, and ad management tools (TikTok for Business n.d.). Like TikTok, YouTube also has its feature, which allows content creators or YouTubers to monetize their channel so that they earn income by ads

revenue that is being put on their videos. It will automatically count as viewers watching the videos. Typically, YouTubers are paid by either ad revenue or endorsement by the company to sponsor the channel. Still, they also have a significant possibility of having those two incomes simultaneously. Those features are suitable for big companies or marketers since the range of ad viewers is also vast.

Since this study will focus on the practice of celebrification, the writer will use a YouTuber named Jimmy Donaldson, famous for his channel MrBeast. MrBeast is a 23 years old American YouTuber that posted his video for the first time in early 2012 with the gaming genre and now has 51 million subscribers after he surged up viewers to watch his ‘wealthy’ content. MrBeast is famous for donating or charity content by doing something extreme or spending money to buy anything at a significant amount. His video entitled “Counting to 100,000” made him viral back in 2017 since it was watched tens of thousand times only in a few days. Since then, MrBeast subscribers multiplied to sixteen million and Quidd started to sponsored his video entitled “Giving A Random Homeless Man \$10000”. Meanwhile, as reported by TIME, the YouTube trend in 2017 was mostly about music and TV shows that were brought to YouTube, such as Ed Sheeran songs, The Mask Singer, America’s Got Talent, and a viral video of children interrupted BBC News Interview (Eadicicco 2017). Therefore, MrBeast’s donation and challenge brought the fresh idea of entertainment on YouTube in 2017 which successfully attract a lot of viewers. Even though he was included in the order of top 10 Highest-paid YouTubers, he is famous for being a non-profit YouTuber.

To conduct the study, the writer will use the concept of celebrification by Alice Marwick since it requires micro-celebrity and self-branding techniques to be analyzed. The writer found several similar previous research on related issues to support this study. The first study entitled “You May Know Me From YouTube: (Micro)-Celebrity in Social Media” by Alice Marwick highlights the development of celebrities in several online social media platforms such as YouTube, Vine, and Tumblr. This research finds that the broadcast media are limited to rights of celebrity’s performance, meanwhile online social media can help traditional artists like Miranda Sings to develop her image by sharing informal content on YouTube. Therefore, this research will guide the writer to conduct a future study about micro-celebrity. The second study by Tanya Eirena Yeru entitled “Celebrification of Instagram Users as a Practice” stated that an Instagram celebrity should be actively and creatively post content that can attract public attention. Using the concept of habitus in Bourdieu’s logic of practice, she found that it is the right strategy developed by Instagram users to challenge the traditional ways of celebrity production. However, the object studies and the media of the future research are different from this research. The following previous study is entitled “Social media celebrity and the institutionalization of Youtube” by Mingyi Hou are having findings on how much Youtuber or Youtube celebs rely on how much they have to be connected with the audience and the cultural preoccupation with self-sufficient uniqueness, whereas in the future research will try to find out how MrBeast is getting YouTube users’ attentions and end up subscribing him. The other research entitled “A Celebrification of Celebgram on Instagram: A Case Study of

@Shireeenz,” done by Lailatul Maghfiroh and Nurul Fitri Hapsari, found that Shirin as an object is the product of the DIY celebrity on Instagram that success in making a self-branding of her. However, future research will analyze different things and media: a YouTuber, MrBeast, which achieved his fame as a wealthy content creator for donation. The last study entitled “In the Time of the Microcelebrity: Celebrification and the YouTuber Zoella” done by Anne Jerslev found that Zoella is also the product of the celebrification based on Youtube. Even though Zoella failed to brand herself due to the book scandal, Zoella can re-brand herself to continue her career as a micro-celebrity, not as a “mainstream” celebrity because people are misconceived about it. Meanwhile, future research will slightly analyze the process of celebrification conducted by MrBeast on YouTube.

There are many kinds of research done about similar issues. Still, most of them are using the object from predecessor social media such as Instagram and Youtube that are not focusing on a specific image. Therefore, this study will be conducted on a YouTuber specializing in content originalization. Along with the era development of the business field, the object will be classified as a micro-celebrity or DIY celebrity product due to his celebrification. The growth of the numbers of MrBeast’s subscribers also supports future research, which can lead to the issue of charity as commodification since the content he posts will get ads revenue or any other kind of advertisement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From the background explained above, the writer decides the statement of the problem:

How does Jimmy Donaldson conduct the celebrification as a DIY celebrity in his YouTube channel MrBeast?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The study's objective is to examine how the celebrification process was conducted by DIY celebrities or micro-celebrity on YouTube. Many studies have analyzed celebrification in several social media platforms, including YouTube, but research related to how a charity event is related to commodification. Therefore, the writer wants to analyze the process of celebrification done by one of the YouTube celebrities named Jimmy Donaldson or MrBeast.

1.4 Significance of the Study

There are numerous significances of the study. For the YouTuber, it will give the idea or knowledge of how to increase their viewers or subscribers by collaborating with a big brand to promote the product, and it will get more recognition from YouTube users. Second, by conducting this study, the writer expects to strengthen the idea of micro-celebrity and DIY celebrity, especially in YouTube since YouTubers will continuously develop content trends that are also suitable to grow the fame of ordinary people who use the platform. Third, the writer expects to give awareness of how their favorite influencer is building the image as a content creator for society. Lastly, this study could provide more references for

the future research of English Department students, especially for the Cultural Studies research, specifically for YouTube and DIY celebrities and micro-celebrity.