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**PERSPECTIVES OF THE NANO-INFLUENCERS IN UTILIZING CHIBI LIVE2D  
MODELS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VTUBING AS  
A BRANDING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT**

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12 August 2024

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### **PERSPECTIVES OF THE NANO-INFLUENCER VTUBERS IN UTILIZING CHIBI LIVE2D MODELS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VTUBING AS A BRANDING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT**

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## Acceptance Page

This paper prepared by **MARIE CHESSRINE L. BADLON** with the title: **“PERSPECTIVES OF THE NANO-INFLUENCERS IN UTILIZING CHIBI LIVE2D MODELS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VTUBING AS A BRANDING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Course.

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## **Biographical Sketch**

Marie Chessrine L. Badlon (she/they) was born on May 6, 2002. She is the eldest daughter of the marital separation of Catherine Landrito and Rommel Badlon. She has a younger brother named Maze Clarion Badlon.

Being a digital native taught her the notion of virtual identities from an early age. She graduated from Informatics Computer Institute, Festival Supermall Senior High, as the valedictorian of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Animation strand in Batch 2020. Amid the pandemic, the University of the Philippines Open University in Los Baños, Laguna, accepted her admission appeal for a Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies.

Her enthusiasm for virtual idols introduced her to the VTubing space. These content creators helped her stay motivated, mainly while she recovered from Persistent Depressive Disorder. During her first year in college, she spent a year as a member at UP Graphic, where she learned the foundations of Live2D cubism.

Apart from her academic pursuits, she has continued her passion as a freelance digital artist for four years and counting. Her visual style evolved from creating over 300 emotes and animated digital artworks for different internet personalities and clients online. Her prospective profession is to become a local motion designer for a virtual brand icon and promote the animation industry of the Philippines.

## **Acknowledgment**

I am expressing my profound appreciation to the faculty members and colleagues I met during my academic years at the University of the Philippines Open University. I am grateful to the Filipino taxpayers and Republic Act No. 10931 for helping me study at an outstanding state university on a full scholarship. This endeavor became possible because of the opportunity to learn with UP Graphic 2020-2021, which introduced me to the fundamentals of Live2D. I appreciate every YouTuber and streamer who produced accessible video lessons.

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## **Dedication**

This project is dedicated to my younger self,  
who dreamed of graduating from college and becoming an animator.



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## Abstract

Virtual YouTubers (VTubers) are social media influencers who use 2D or 3D models as their visual identification while creating content online. As feedback, the audience members of a VTuber can create *nijisousakus* based on the brand identity of the avatar. An example of a *nijisousaku* is a chibi, a caricature method by super deforming anatomy to highlight emotions, maximize cuteness, and reimagine an avatar into a mini version.

This qualitative study applied Herbert Simon's (1969) Design Thinking Process to explain the creation of chibi Live2D models. It employed Erving Goffman's (1959) Theory of Self-presentation to analyze the interpersonal and sociological connections of the focus group to the models. The project implementation of chibi Live2D models and data collection ran for four (4) months, from March to June 2024.

The results suggested that having an additional model in chibi form can effectively promote an influencer's brand identity. These served as a medium for social engagement among nano-influencer VTubers, inspiring community members to create discussions, fan art, or memes in response. Features like codified expressions are valuable for setting visual gags. Hand tracking or body physics highlighted the VTubers' ability to convey figurative expressions through voice and movement, deepening their connection with the audience. The participants in this study plan to utilize the chibi Live2D models again in their upcoming streams, especially to create a more comforting atmosphere.

*Keywords: Virtual YouTuber (VTuber); Live2D; chibi; Character Design; social media*

## Definition of Terms

**Art:** The end product from illustrating a model.

**Avatar:** The digital representation of a character, persona, or social media user.

**Chibi (S.D.):** Japanese caricature super deforms anatomy to maximize cuteness.

**Gijinka:** The anthropomorphism or humanization of a non-human object.

**Live2D (L2D):** The technique of using separate layers to animate a static 2D image.

**Live2D software module:** An application for animating or rigging Live2D models.

**Lore:** A backstory of a VTuber.

**Low-deformed (L.D.):** Art style with realistic anatomy but slightly exaggerated.

**Model:** The digital construct or technical details when creating an avatar.

**Moe:** The feelings of strong affection, usually feminine traits, towards characters.

**Nakanohito:** A voice or motion actor behind the real-time animation of an avatar.

**Nano-influencer:** a type of social media influencer with 100 to 5,000 followers.

***Nijisousaku***: Secondary creation or derivative works.

***Otaku***: innovative enthusiasts or fans of pop culture

***Persona***: A part of a person's personality that others notice or perceive.

***Rig***: The process of creating a framework for animation.

***Social media influencer***: Social media user with an exclusive reputation online. The subcategories are nano, micro, macro, and mega.

***Seiso***: Japanese for purity, cleanliness, and wholesomeness.

***Toushin***: Head-to-body ratio

***Unseiso***: Internet slang for the opposite of *seiso* and to describe comedic vulgarity.

***Virtual YouTuber (VTuber)***: A genre of content creator who uses a virtual avatar as their visual identification. Their activities are described as “VTubing.”

## I. INTRODUCTION

New media are communication technologies for all computer-based or web-related communication technologies characterized by persistence, innovations, creative participation, and interactive user interfaces. These technologies revolutionize how we interact with each other remotely. One of its examples is the virtual world—an online community environment designed and shared by social media users to interact in a simulated realm (Miller, 2021). Users can interact with each other using text-based, two-dimensional, or three-dimensional graphical models.

In the digital realm, we can choose how we represent ourselves. This portrays the creation of a persona – a part of a user’s personality that others easily notice or perceive. For many, having a unique model shows their persona online. Hence, a user participating in the virtual world has a digital representation of their persona known as an avatar.

Virtual YouTuber (VTuber) is a genre of social media influencers utilizing digital avatars. They can develop a strong brand identity while having an exclusive reputation from building an online community. As a VTuber, a benefit of being a successful social media influencer is the active participation of the established community. Community members of a VTuber can create *nijisousakus* (derivative works) based on the brand identity of said VTuber online. Derivatives help create engaging feedback between the audiences.

There are several art techniques for creating derivatives. An example is a chibi, a caricature method for super-deforming anatomy to highlight emotions, maximize cuteness, and reimagine an identity into a smaller version derived from the low-

deformed. On the other hand, low-deformed models follow an art style that exaggerates several body parts while mimicking the proportions of realistic anatomy.

The social media influencer hierarchy has four sub-categories according to their follower count: nano, micro, macro, and mega. Nano-influencers have the least number of followers in the hierarchy with 100-5000 but can develop more favorable brand attitudes in their communities (Lyu & Brewster, 2020). Notably, recent sources indicate that the follower count of Nano-influencers is up to 10,000.

As such, grounded on the findings of Lyu and Brewster (2020), the study focused on the design process behind chibi Live2D models on the nano-influencer level, and the said models' role in branding and audience engagement among VTubers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study focused on the influence of Live2D model designs on the self-presentation and brand identity of VTubers. Specifically, it highlighted the impact of chibi, a super-deformed drawing style emphasizing the character design's cuteness. The study also examined the branding and social influence of VTubers, particularly nano-influencers - social media content creators with a lesser following but with a highly engaged audience based on the social media influence hierarchy.

Moreover, the study investigated how VTubers utilized the chibi Live2D Models, designed to fit the brand identity of the streamer, and how it can become a tool for social engagement for their community and target audience. The research also aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do nano-influencers and designers perceive and describe the process of creating chibi Live2D models for social media branding?
2. What are the experiences and perceptions of nano-influencers regarding their use of chibi Live2D models in their social media content?
3. What is the impact of chibi Live2D models, particularly as an entertainment branding tool and visual identity, on the experiences of the participating nano-influencers?

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To create a functional and appealing chibi Live2D model based on the established brand identity of the participating nano-influencers;
- To assess the relationship between a chibi Live2D model and the streaming or usability experiences among the focus group;
- To determine the impact of Live2D models, particularly as an entertainment branding tool, on the engagement and satisfaction of the influencers, and
- To describe the design process and interpersonal connections behind chibi Live2D models and assess the factors that can improve future workflows and design processes.

### **Significance of the Study**

Lehtovrita (2023) predicted that VTubers will increase in the coming years as they have become an integral part of the online space, especially in live streaming and content creation. The study holds significance because it addressed the scarcity and literature gaps for identifying the factors in the design practices of secondary creation of avatars, especially in chibi Live2D models. In particular, the study explained the

design processes and interactions between the Live2D models and VTubers. The study addressed the gap in understanding VTubers on an interpersonal level, a gap stated by Turner (2022), to understand their views and motives.

The study touched upon the topics of the perception of VTubers with their own identity, *moe* anthropomorphism, symbiotic co-creativity, and the nuances of VTuber content. The study findings may serve as a valuable resource for emerging artists, riggers, animators, and content creators interested in the underlying process and the influence of VTubing.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The study focused on identifying the factors and processes that impact the production of chibi Live2D models, and the streaming experiences of the nano-influencer VTubers to the newly created avatars. The process began with the design approaches for a chibi Live2D avatar as a branding tool for social enjoyment online based on the established brand identities of the participating nano influencers. The Live2D models follow the design practices commonly done in chibi forms, which are super-deformed and cutified proportions. The expected design practices with the chibi form are uniformity, balance, simplicity, exaggeration, and emphasis on its cuteness. Chibi forms follow approximately 1:2 *toushin*.

As part of the design process, it also addresses the focus group's experiences testing the generated chibi multimedia product, such as their behaviors, attitudes, views, and utilization patterns.

Due to these, the study is limited in its investigation of these elements from the front-stage standpoint of participating VTubers as nano-influencers and the backstage design activities associated with the chibi Live2D models. Thus, the analysis of the said activities will remain focused on the user experience and design process of the chibi Live2D models created for this project.

There are also several limitations in the methodology used in the study. I established an implementation schedule and specific criteria for participants to accurately investigate and design the digital avatar, including their brand identities, personas, and audience engagement. Furthermore, the created avatar follows a specific base model to limit the project's expansion.

The study employed three instruments for data collection. Synchronous semi-structured interviews were used within the focus group to understand the interpersonal connections and perspectives of being VTubers and their utilization of models. These interviews were conducted in written form and happened before and after the creation of chibi Live2D models to undertake the empathize and testing phases. To explain and interpret the backstage design process of creating a chibi Live2D model, I utilized autoethnography. Lastly, video analysis was used to support the analysis in the testing phase and to focus on identifying the audience feedback received by the nano-influencers as social entertainers online.

This sample focused on three nano-influencers as the focus group. Two (2) are from the Philippines and one (1) is from Indonesia. Based on the social media influencer hierarchy (Lyu & Brewster, 2020), nano-influencers have the lowest level. However, they feature stronger parasocial relationships within their audience community and can develop more favorable brand attitudes. Nano-influencers range

from 100 to 5,000 followers according to Lyu and Brewster's study (2020), while other studies lead to 10,000 followers. This study followed Lyu and Brewster's findings hence, VTubers exceeding 5,000 followers were excluded from this study.

Moreover, the data gathering location for the interviews was conducted via Discord, an online social media platform. The data collected from the in-depth interviews were all in written form. It was executed in under an hour before and after the testing phases to collect the data more easily. Due to the physical barriers and the nature of the VTubers to mainly use virtual avatars, I was limited in collecting data from the focus group's verbal cues and body language while conducting the study.

Additionally, the data gathering was limited to the observations of the focus group's stream tests on their respective Twitch channels online, offline tests with their stream overlays, and the interpretations of its data, taking into consideration additional variables, such as tweets directly related to the models to validate the social reach of the nano-influencers to their audience.

Specific exclusion criteria were administered to the focus group to ensure an effective testing phase for the study. Only the Twitch streams and social media content on Twitter utilizing the chibi model operated by the VTubers from May to June were considered for the study. On the other hand, if a participant failed to conduct a stream online due to schedule conflicts, they were accepted to test the chibi model offline and articulate their opinions and expectations instead. Technical issues with streaming, in general, are outside the scope of this research.

Furthermore, the focus group may have experienced internal and external distractions, like fatigue and noisy environments. These may affect the results, yet the study had limited control over the research environment. In combination with only

having three (3) nano-influencer VTubers participate, the findings might only reflect the participants and their experiences within the study.

The general time frame of the study was conducted for four (4) months. To find the appropriate participants for the study, the promotional materials were posted on my Facebook and Twitter under my pen name, which lasted from March 11 to March 16, 2024. The initial interviews were on March 24 to 29, while the final interviews were on June 15-16 and July 2. These interviews lasted for only an hour. Lastly, the observation period happened throughout June and was based on the length of the participants' social media content i.e. streams, offline tests, and tweets.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### The Body of the Review

Historically, VTubing is deeply connected with social entertainment as a new media form of self-expression, especially for the members of queer or ostracized communities. The previous literature mentioned several themes for VTubing, such as the social media influence, the relationship between an Avatar-Persona, the design processes for Live2D models, and the features found in *nijisousaku* chibi avatars.

The academic literature showed major gaps addressing the lack of exploration for rigging and animation techniques when designing in Live2D Cubism. Furthermore, the previous studies recommended studying the perception of VTubers with their own identity, *moe* anthropomorphism, symbiotic co-creativity, and the nuances of VTuber content.

### The Influences Behind VTubing

A Virtual YouTuber (VTuber) is a digital era phenomenon referring to a genre of content creators who use a fictional character on video-sharing and streaming platforms. By utilizing motion capture technology, a *Nakanohito* (voice actor) provides figurative acting to animate their avatar in real-time (Lu et al., 2021).

Although some VTubing activities share similarities with real-person content, their identity highlights the cultural connections between idols and *otaku*, a term used by Japanese college students in the 80s to mean anime fans. The term, once stigmatized, has evolved into a more positively perceived umbrella term encompassing 'innovative pop culture enthusiasts' (Zhou, 2020) that has found its way

to the VTuber scene. VTuber avatars replicate a database of codified facial expressions commonly found in anime cultures.

Other than that, VTubers also use vital terms similar to Japanese idol culture. The term "Debut" is used to introduce a new VTuber talent or model, while "Graduation" refers to when the talent decides to retire (Nihongo Master, 2022). The debuts of the previous generation of VTubers made it a norm for viewers to expect the VTubers to introduce themselves and uniquely showcase their models' features, as well as their characteristics and lore.

Before the current conceptualization of VTubers, there were already virtual idols in the late 1990s. Kyoko Date was a virtual idol produced by the Horipro Digital Entertainment Company to promote entertainment services through new media applications and early broadcasting systems. In 2010, the YouTube channel NitroPlus featured an anime girl, Super Sonico, to create internet content. As a company mascot, Super Sonico can be considered as the "first" VTuber online (Merryweather, 2024).

However, the term "VTuber" was only officially coined six (6) years later by Kizuna AI in her self-introduction video. AI described herself as a portmanteau of Virtual and YouTubers, differentiating herself from real-person YouTubers (Kizuna, 2016). By 2018, Super Sonico distinguished herself as a VTuber on a channel dedicated only to her (Sherman, 2018). Horipro also introduced the daughter of Kyoko Date, Ayano Date, who also debuted as a VTuber in the same year (Ayano Date, 2018).

Other digital characters that shared a similar mechanism with VTubers before Super Sonico in 2010 are called "Proto-VTubers," a combination of the word

“Prototype” and “VTubers.” The term Proto-VTuber helps identify the early pioneers of live animated characters. In the early 1960s, Lee Harrison III experimented with analog circuits and cathode ray tubes to design the first working motion capture rig. He created the series Animac, which featured The Stick Man in 1967 and Mr. Computer Image in 1968 (Sieg, 2022). In 1989, the Jim Henson Company featured a character named Waldo, using the mechanism of an animatronic puppet rendered digitally as a 3D avatar (The Jim Henson Company, 2011). Waldo and the Animac characters are Proto-VTubers for social entertainment and new media interactivity.

With that, audience expectations differ significantly between real-person content creators and VTubers. While real-person live streamers present themselves directly, VTubers primarily use digital avatars as their medium of interaction. For real-person content creators, viewers often expect attractive features or charismatic appearances to contribute to their success in comparison to their VTuber counterparts. Kim and Yoo's (2022) study revealed that South Koreans in their 20s and 30s are more familiar with real-person creators, viewing them as ideal and practical, whereas they perceive VTubers as neutral, professional, and appealing. Similarly, Lu et al. (2021) found that audiences apply different norms to VTubers, showing greater tolerance for potentially offensive language due to associations with gaming, anime, and manga cultures. However, the visual anonymity of VTubers, referred to as *Nakanohitos* backstage, can create a sense of distance for some viewers.

Interestingly, Sakuma et al. (2023) demonstrated that the effectiveness of content creators varies by context. Their study found that real-person content was generally more persuasive in product promotion. VTubers, however, showed greater influence specifically in promoting tapioca drinks and similar beverages.

Other advantages of being a VTuber include escapism, anonymity, better character immersion, privacy protection, and convenient acting regardless of how they appear in real life (Lehtovirta, 2023). VTubers have total control of their avatar, which helps them overcome aspects of physical appearance that they may perceive as negative or lesser. For example, a shy person in real life may speak more confidently if they choose to become a VTuber, as VTubing conceals their external appearance.

VTubers also want to present themselves as cozy and inviting for viewers who feel like outsiders – someone not liked or accepted as a member of a group or society (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024). Outsiders as a descriptive term also link to the stigmatized undertones of being an *otaku*. VTubers can also provide background noise for viewers who are coworking or doing other activities.

In line with the benefits of being a VTuber, some VTubers are role-players who create a unique persona and separate their “normal personality” (Turner, 2022). Although it is common practice for VTubers to have a background story about their persona referred to as “lore,” roleplaying is uncommon because they want to humanize themselves as streamers.

### **VTubers As Social Media Influencers**

VTubers mainly use social media platforms to engage online. Social media refers to communication applications or platforms on the Internet, such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and others (Mohammad & Maulidiyah, 2023). These platforms allow access to influencer status, allowing a broad range of individuals to attain social media-based recognition as content creators. Hence, VTubers are also classified as social media influencers (SMIs) (Zhou, 2020) with their use of Twitter, YouTube, and

Twitch as their main platforms to create commercialized content focused on their niche and interests while engaging with their viewers.

Analyzing the success of Japan-based VTuber corporations, the growth of VTubers will likely continue to increase as developments in virtual technology and new media arts will become more accessible, easier, and cheaper for content creators to produce materials for the public. VTubers can fulfill areas including digital markets or e-commerce, tourism, esports, or charities (Ringo, 2023).

According to the study of Lyu and Brewster (2020), there are four primary levels of SMIs based on follower count: mega (>1 million followers), macro (100k–1m), micro (5k–100k), and nano – less than 5k followers. However, the exact range of followers varies between sources. Based on this, Lyu and Brewster (2020) emphasized that marketers should hire the lowest level of SMI hierarchy, nano-influencers, as they have stronger parasocial relationships and can develop more favorable brand attitudes.

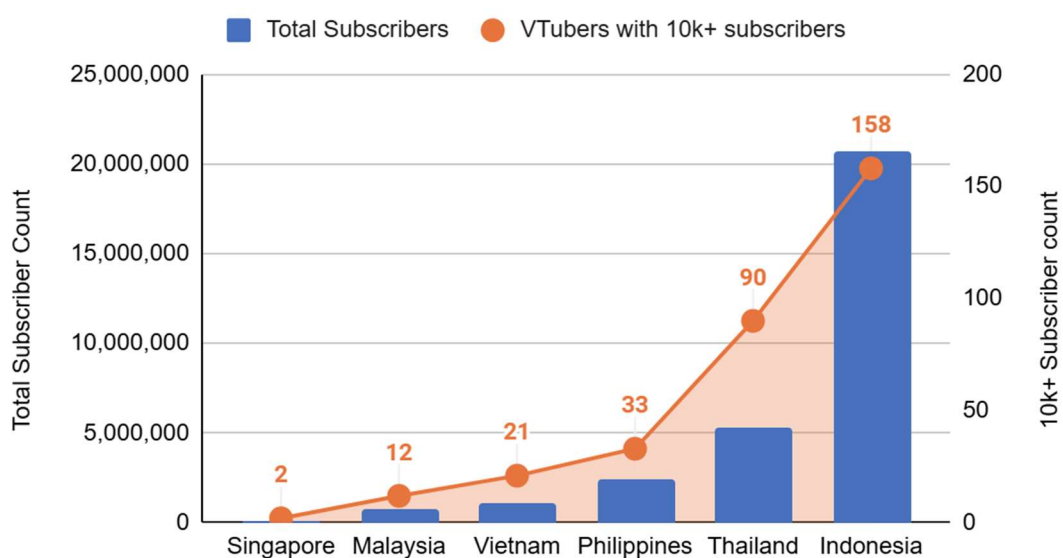


Figure 1. Southeast Asia VTuber Community Analytics

Ringo (2023) provided statistics on the total subscribers and prominent VTubers in Southeast Asia. In 2023, more than 2.4 million viewers subscribed to Filipino VTuber personalities. The Philippines had at least 33 VTubers considered macro influencers on YouTube, which ranked third out of the six countries shown. These findings prompted the ideal sample group of the study, as nano-influencers are the most approachable subjects.

### **Avatar-Persona on Social Media**

VTubers represent themselves with avatars while performing with voice, motion capture, or face tracking. These digital avatars can be static (PNG), two-dimensional (2D), three-dimensional (3D), or mixed media. These avatars represent a self-driven reflection. *Nakanohitos* perceive the camera, microphone, appearance, and voice as tools to manipulate their self-presentation (Turner, 2022).

A singular *Nakanohito* can have multiple VTuber avatars because social media makes the creation of various Avatar-Personas more distinguishable. An avatar is an extension of the VTuber's self, serving as the concrete embodiment of an identity in a virtual space. Traditionally, an avatar is the virtual representation of a player in-game (Byron, 2023). On the other hand, a persona is a constructed, interaction-based, public identity between the individual and the socials it derived from (Procter, 2020).

*Nakanohitos* may also front multiple avatars and personas in various forms that convey the same real-person traits, such as speaking patterns and cultural characteristics across several platforms. As such, a VTuber can be considered a *Nakanohito* having total control over their persona(s) and avatar design(s).

VTubers perform avatar motion through two (2) modes of acting: embodied acting and figurative acting (Suan, 2021). Embodied acting refers to producing a sense

of realism through unique gestures, movements, and facial expressions acted by the *Nakanohito* in real-time. This motion capture includes dramaturgical concepts through voice acting and method acting. Audience members often perceive embodied acting makes VTubers feel humanlike. Figurative acting, on the other hand, relies on a literal pre-existing database of codified expressions. Since the *otaku* culture influences some VTubers, these databases are similar to anime mediums, relying on specific codes that mimic the nature of anime expressions. This type of acting relies on specific buttons, toggles, or automated shifting, translating the action to a codified expression. Hence, acting figuratively for VTubers is akin to the use of emojis.

For VTubers, the avatar contributes to the performative level of interactivity during live streams (Byron, 2023). A typical example of this is on Twitch, where every audience member can pay or donate for channel points that will throw virtual objects or play sound effects to interact with or interrupt the VTuber. As a result, the VTuber may overlook, and react physically or verbally (Turner, 2022). Channel points, or redeems, are customizable to the VTuber's liking, which the *Nakanohito* still has total control over. Consequently, the fictitious persona and avatar blend and safely reflect the real-life characteristics of a *Nakanohito*.





The audience may perceive the Avatar-Persona in two (2) ways (Lu et al., 2021). First, fans who are more attracted by Avatar-Persona may be stricter about the behaviors of the VTubers, which aligns with their hyper persona model. On the other hand, viewers who view VTubers for platonic enjoyment would care more about their personalities than the Avatar-Persona. These behaviors create a push-pull narrative towards the VTuber among its audience and viewers (Zhou, 2020).

## Derivative Chibi Avatars

Through concentrated efforts, VTubers successfully fostered and established their communities, promoting appropriate and supportive behaviors toward other content creators and audiences. Members of an active VTuber community can frequently create *nijisousaku* or derivatives. These are inter-referenced, secondary creations, fan creations, fan art, or memes that are specific interpretations or criticisms of the VTuber (Suan, 2021). In exceptional cases, a derivative can become a VTuber's alternate avatar or persona when accepted by the VTuber's audience community.

**Table 1**

*Original and Derivative Chibi VTuber Designs in Hololive*

	Original Amelia Watson	Smol Ame (2D)	Original Anya Melfissa	Smoloro Anya (3D)
Model				
Illustrator	Aoi Nabi	Walfie	Uekura Eku	Keenbiscuit
Rigger	Name	Haruki Saotome	Otsukue	Yosua Thamrin





Southeast Asian VTubers also experience similar derivative situations. The visual design of Anya Melissa, a member of the second-generation Hololive Indonesia, was culturally inspired and an anthropomorphism of the weapon concept Keris or Kris, a 9th-century Indonesian sword (Manik, 2021).

Keenbiscuit's fan art became the official Smoloro avatars and was later adopted by Anya's generation. VTubers encourage the creation of derivatives as these establish an interactive feedback loop between audiences throughout various social media platforms (Byron, 2023).

For instance, Walfie is well-known in the Hololive English community as a fan artist. Amelia Watson of Hololive Myth English integrated this avatar design into a distinct character derived from her original design. Amelia's original VTuber character is that of a time-traveling detective. However, the fan art that went by the moniker "Smol Ame" is said to have originated in a different time frame. These designs are shown in Table 1. Both the original Amelia and Smol Ame maintain a similar speech style when streaming online.

**Table 2**

*Original and Chibi VTuber Designs of Ironmouse*

	Pink Rock	Pink Rock (chibi)	Season 3	Season 3 (chibi)
Live2D Model				
Concept	epebe		puppeteer7777	
Illustration	2wintails	Kerwoe_	Rosuuri	Noi
Rig	2wintails	Kerwoe_	Etctr	1. Misu 2. Noi

Aside from Hololive, other VTubers also engage with artists and riggers to develop alternate brand identities that are not necessarily fan made from the start. Table 2 depicts the Live2D outfits that Ironmouse owned or commissioned. She is a Puerto Rican VTuber and Twitch's most subscribed female streamer since 2022. During the second cycleathon for Common Variable Immunodeficiency (CVID) hosted by CDawgVA, she featured the chibi version of Ironmouse Season 3 (Ironmouse VODS, 2023).

The creation of these derivatives was related to *moe* feelings, which refer to the affectionate response by the viewers to the fictional characters (Manik, 2021). The Japanese cultural critic Hiroki Azuma (2009) identified *moe* elements as part of the database consumption (Azuma, 2009, as cited in Perdijk, 2020). These elements became more prominent within the *otaku* community as the database became more distinguishable (Byron, 2023).

Azuma (2009) described the database as combining certain visual elements into work. Therefore, the database consumption model relies on social interactions to exist (Azuma, 2009, as cited in Perdijk, 2020). Socializing through *nijisousakus* reproduces the most appealing features of a character within a community. Hence, the database explains the artistic choices between characters sharing similar features like gigantic eye sizes and unrealistic body proportions.

Consequently, the database consumption model influences the art style of the derivatives, especially chibi works. Chibi was influenced by *kawaii* (verb) and *Kawaisa* (noun), as they defined the cuteness of a character. The foundations of the *kawaii* style came from the extreme concept of femininity and childish innocence.

*Chibi* forms have approximate design practices for the characters to be considered as such. Chibi characters must have a uniform size and shape without

regard to gender identity. The features of the character must be simple for it to be distinguishable, but the emotions have exaggeration. Its proportions must have approximately 1:2 *toushin* or head-to-body ratio with squishy joints. Hence, the form isn't anatomically correct as a humanoid but must be designed with proper balance as the goal of chibifying a character is to emphasize cuteness.

### **Designing Models Through Live2D**

This study focused on Live2D for creating models, the medium standard among VTubers. Live2D stands for two things: the technique and application. The Live2D technique uses separate layers to animate a static image, which is evident in some anime games and VTubing. On the other hand, Live2D Cubism software is an application for producing rigs and animation that simulate the illusion of a 2.5 dimension. Live2D models are a way to create a brand identity as they visually make a social media influencer unique, helping the audience understand their expectations.

Lehtovrita (2023) observed the lengthy process of creating a VTuber model using Live2D Cubism. However, their study revealed a gap in understanding the advanced techniques of the program, like gluing, skinning, and movement animations. The current body of literature also fluctuates and fails to engage with VTubers on an interpersonal level (Turner, 2022).

With these, the present study will focus on the focus group's brand identity and streaming experience through chibi Live2D models. By manipulating these models, the study can investigate the influence on brand perception and viewer engagement. This study is not only focused on analyzing the character creation of VTubers but also on understanding the design process behind digital avatars at an interpersonal level.

## Theoretical Framework

*"We are all just actors trying to control and manage our public image; we act based on how others might see us."*

- Goffman, 1959

The study examined the variables through Erving Goffman's Theory of Self-Presentation to understand the processes behind VTubing (Goffman, 1959, as cited in Turner, 2022). Goffman analyzed the interpersonal interactions that significantly contribute to the sociological knowledge behind human interaction and identity. Using dramaturgy, behaviors based on the audience and setting are based on the "Front stage" and the "Backstage" (Goffman, 1959, as cited in Barnhart, 2005).

On the front stage, people consciously project and control their impressions of themselves. Online identities perform on the front stage by curating their public image through marketing, visual elements, and communication to evoke specific emotions and associations in their viewers. Social conventions also influence the characteristics of a persona. For VTubers, their avatars become their, or part of, the brand identity as it becomes a focus of the stream.

The backstage of VTubing is often concerned with technical issues, like adjusting the avatar models and streaming setup (Turner, 2022). Even before the presentation, VTubers go through an exhaustive creative process. Erving Goffman (1959) also explained backstage as the authentic self, where individuals can drop their persona and reveal their natural behavior. VTubers can also have backstage moments on the stream because of the imagined audiences, where they cannot physically see the viewers because of the different real-world locations. Hence, the backstage also focuses on a person's technicality and emotional aspects when they do not project an impression or a persona.

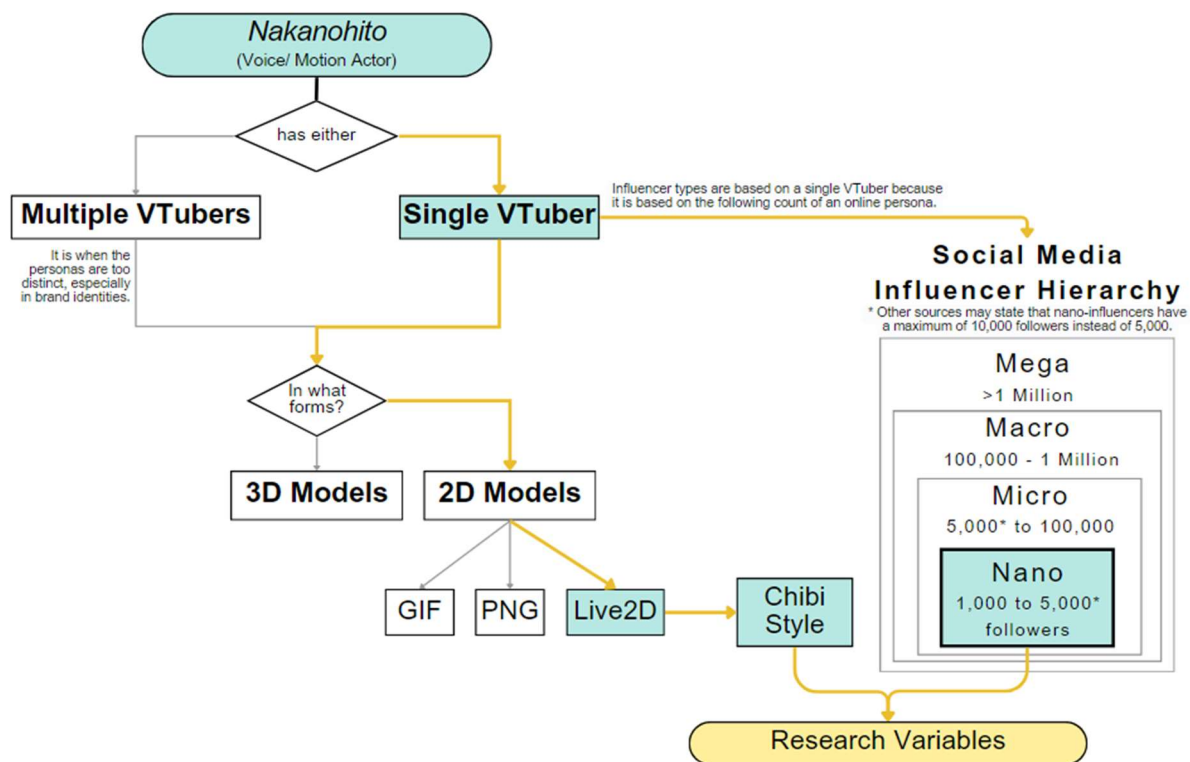


Figure 2. Mind Map Depicting the Variables (Badlon, 2024)

The study's independent variable is the chibi Live2D model. Hence, it was related to the technical backstage of VTubing. It explored the design process for creating a visual identity for the chibi VTuber model, which included the codified databases, avatar features, and animation style by manipulating the body proportions, animation, and color schemes derived from the focus group's main avatar.

The dependent variable is the impact and related effectiveness of the chibi VTuber models based on the focus group's usage experiences. This study analyzed the dependent variables through two concepts: brand recognition, where viewers can associate the avatar with the influencer, and emotional connection, where the nano-influencers exhibit specific interactions or behaviors during or after the presentation of

the chibi Live2D model. The discussion also briefly explains the audience's feedback from the nano-influencers to measure the impact of avatars.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research approach with an explanatory and narrative purpose. It inquired about the design process and interpersonal connections that underpin the VTubers' utility of the chibi Live2D models. As such, the data procured are the findings from synchronous in-depth interviews in written form from the focus group, factoring their front-stage behavior and satisfaction with the created chibi Live2D models as multimedia products. Moreover, observational techniques and autoethnography are employed to identify and explain the contributing backstage variables in Live2D models as a branding tool for nano-influencers in social entertainment.

#### **Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted entirely online on digital platforms such as Discord, Twitter, and Twitch, where participants communicate from diverse locations. It explored the focus group's social media interactions, behaviors, and user experiences regarding the chibi Live2D model as a streamer.

#### **Participants of the Study**

The participants consisted of three independent VTubers. These VTubers met the following criteria: (1) Have a follower count below 5,000 on their central streaming platform like Twitch or YouTube as the main criteria in the nano-influencer category; (2) Have actively streamed in the past 30 days on their platform before the call of participants; and, (3) Is well-informed of the VTuber space. Furthermore, the

participants must have sufficient computers to run stream tests utilizing the Chibi Live2D model. The chosen participants came from the Philippines and a neighboring Southeast Asian country, Indonesia.

### **Sampling Method**

The sampling procedure adopted purposive sampling. A call was posted on Twitter and Facebook groups under my pen name looking for nano-influencer VTubers as participants from March 11 to March 16, 2024. It indicated that a participant must have certain qualifications such as (1) they must have actively streamed for the past 30 days before the time of posting; (2) they must have 100 to 5,000 followers; (3) they must be well-informed of the VTuber space; (4) must be willing to participate in at least two in-depth interviews and take part in the design process and stream tests using the chibi Live 2D.

Initially, the ideal requirement for a nano-influencer is a maximum of 5,000 followers, but the sampling method of the study could only reach a participant with 3,000 followers. Furthermore, the participants must own a webcam, a computer, VTube studio, OBS, and Discord for technological requirements.

By March 17, 2024, three VTubers were selected for the study. They were chosen according to the highest follower count of an interested participant, which was 3,000 followers. A significant quality of the chosen participants is that they had a range of 500 between the follower counts. Furthermore, the participants had different experiences and aims in VTubing such as self-expression and promotion of unique skill sets like Sinarynn's teaching, Vinerra's *unseiso* gaming, and Yabi's rigging experiences often showcased in their streams.

The goal of selecting specific VTubers as the focus group was to ensure that they have distinct traits from each other, attain the qualities of adherent nano-influencers, and have the capabilities to handle model testing and provide critical feedback within the schedule.

### **Instruments**

The study employed three (3) instruments for data collection: In-depth interviews, autoethnography, observation methods. Synchronous semi-structured interviews were used within the focus group to understand the interpersonal connections and perspectives of being VTubers and their utilization of the models. These interviews were conducted in written form and happened before and after creating the chibi Live2D models to undertake the empathize and testing phases.

The interviews had two phases. The initial interviews happened from March 24 to 29. It aimed to empathize with their backgrounds in VTubing and define the qualities the focus group envisions in a chibi Live2D model. Lastly, the final interviews were held on June 15-16 and July 2. It focused on collecting qualitative data regarding the experiences and perceptions of the nano-influencers based on their utilization of the chibi Live2D models in their social media content.

To explain and interpret the backstage design process of creating a chibi Live2D model, I utilized autoethnography. It sought to find the explanation for the perceptions and design process of creating chibi Live2D models for social media branding.

Lastly, video analysis and observations on test streams and social media content were used to support the analysis in the testing phase and to focus on identifying the audience feedback received by the nano-influencers as social

entertainers online. It aimed to highlight the impact of chibi Live2D models as entertainment branding tools.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

The in-depth interviews were conducted synchronously on Discord online in a semi-structured form which lasted only an hour per participant. I collected the interview data in written form. Days prior I conducted an interview, I asked the participants for their availability. Then, the interviews followed three steps.

Firstly, I greeted the participants, outlined the purpose, and informed them of the maximum interview duration. Next, I asked the questions and allowed the participants to answer before proceeding to the next. I aimed for the participants to answer a question at a time to avoid confusion. Lastly, I ended the interview by informing them of the next steps and the possible dates for the testing phases and final interview.

For the video analysis and observations, I asked permission from the focus group to use and download their streams for the study. I gathered the data directly from their Twitch streams, offline stream tests, and related Twitter posts.

### **Data Analysis**

This study utilized a narrative approach to analyze data from transcripts from semi-structured transcripts, autoethnography, and observations from the stream testing phases. Narrative analysis sought to review the primary narratives of a focus group's personal stories and viewpoints. This approach focused on how individuals express themselves based on language, emotions, motives, and behavioral

experiences. The aim was to collect these qualitative factors to comprehend the VTubing community through an interpersonal lens.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study centered on the values reflected in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS-2) (Panel on Research Ethics, 2021). Essentially, the study followed the ethical procedures for the participants to have informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, the right to withdraw, transparency, intellectual property, and debriefing.

Foremost, I made no additional claims to the brand identities, names, original character designs, or any form of trademarks and intellectual properties of the VTubers. The study respected the guidelines under the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines (RA 8293).

The chibi Live2D models of the study were derivative works—defined as a new work, provided the chibi models did not violate any subsisting copyright upon the original work employed or any part thereof. The chibi models were adaptations and artistic works. Hence, I own the chibi Live2D models as a derivative work. However, the participants own the brand identities the chibi models adapted.

Chapter 10 of TCPS-2 defines qualitative research as understanding how people think, act, and behave in an environment. Hence, the study focused on an inductive understanding of a limited but diverse and dynamic approach through in-depth interviews, autoethnography, and observational studies. During the

observational research, I joined the testing activities as an audience member while allowing the participants to test the chibi Live2D models.

The data collection procedures prioritized receiving consent, showing transparency, and debriefing the participants. Before conducting any data collection procedures, I had the written informed consent from the participants. To honor the value of Respect for Persons, the participants should give their consent voluntarily only after receiving full disclosure of the objectives and the data processing of the study.

To provide transparency, an introductory phase for every data collection, particularly in the in-depth interviews. The participants also had opportunities to refuse, withdraw consent, or request the withdrawal of their data from the study at any time. The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and appropriately disposed of any information not included in the final manuscript three months following the manuscript (National Privacy Commission, 2012).

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Herbert Simon (1969) introduced the design thinking process to simplify the interactions between customers and designers. It follows five (5) steps: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Deliver, and Test. As a multimedia practitioner, Simon's process (1969) can efficiently help when communicating with others during a design process.

Hence, to collect the data for the study, I used in-depth interviews while sharing similar concepts from Simon's Design Thinking Process (1969). The interviews and observational methods aimed to answer the perceptions, experiences, and impact of chibi Live2D models on the participants.

Empathizing with the VTubers is essential, as it is the first step in the Design Thinking Process, especially during the backstage development, as it can help us identify their needs as the users of a multimedia product. To interpersonally understand the front-stage aspects of VTubing within the participants, Table 3 showed the demographic profile of the participants. Specifically, it tackled their VTuber name, persona, country of origin, and the number of Twitch followers during the study. These data became the foundation for empathizing with the focus group and understanding the essential visual features of their VTuber identity.

## Sociodemographic Profile of Participants

**Table 3**

*Profiles of the Focus Group*

<b>VTuber Name</b>	<b>Persona</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Followers (Twitch)</b>
VinerraVessali	<i>Unseiso</i> Lapicentaur (half-human, half-rabbit)	Philippines	1.6K
YabiVT	An assassin from the future	Philippines	2K
Sinarynn	Native Indonesian plant humanoid	Indonesia	3K

The focus group had prior experience working with an artist and rigger before conducting the research. They currently own Live2D models and have established strong brand identities. Their stream content mainly focused on “Just Chatting,” gaming, and charity events.

Their motives for joining the VTubing space stemmed from the pressure to maintain their looks, especially as women. They believed that becoming a VTuber increased their comfort and confidence. VTubing was another way for them to show their facial expressions while solving the issues of insecurities when presenting. The focus group agreed that it became a revolutionary space to express individuality, make art, add security, and meet new people. It was a way to show personality through the form of avatars.

There were differences in the reception between audiences when revealing the *Nakanohito* and VTuber persona. Vinerra Vessali mentioned that when she switched

from being a face cam streamer to a VTuber, her audience asked the reason for the switch instead of what VTubing was since it was already popular during the pandemic. Some audience members who were used to seeing her face on the stream stopped supporting her after she became a full-time VTuber.

On the other hand, YabiVT observed no vast difference when conversing with her audience members when she met them as her physical self and as a VTuber. Meeting her audience physically led them closer to more heartwarming streams and inside jokes seen or understood only by the backstage personalities.

The focus group regarded VTubing as digital puppetry, with the *Nakanohitos* making the avatar as expressive as possible. Hatsune Miku, a popular virtual idol from Japan, was a common example of explaining VTubing to newcomers. Another example mentioned by the focus group was “Belle” (2021), a movie directed by Mamoru Hosoda featuring a unique way of expressing an identity through a digital screen.

According to the focus group, branding was essential for content creation, since it promotes the purpose of identification, mainly when VTubing acts as a business. A good starter for brand identity included identifiable names, colors, and theme aspects visibly shown in a model. According to Sinarynn, understanding perception data was essential in building a brand, as it helps better comprehend the feedback artists or streamers might receive from our audience. VTubers should try to establish their brand before their audience, so they can have total control over the content they provide. This background knowledge led to understanding the participants' brand identities and creating a functional and appealing chibi Live2D model.

Vinerra Vessali's brand identity as a VTuber is a small yet chaotic bunny girl who often shouts and screams. Her VTuber name "Vinerra" came from vines, while Vessali is a shortened last name from the character in the Pandora Hearts game. She had always wanted a pet rabbit, but growing up with strict Asian parents didn't allow her to own one. Hence, she incorporated the likeness of rabbits into her avatar's design.

YabiVT, more known as Yabi, became a VTuber because of her love for art, which she sees as an extension of herself. Her brand identity reflects the *Nakanohito*, the operator, or her true self. Her persona is that of an assassin who can time travel. This brand allowed her to show off her skills as a virtual artist and have complete control of her identity to her liking. Creatively being herself was essential as a VTuber.

Sinarynn's visual branding was a *gijinka* of an Indonesian Balinese flower. A *gijinka* is a humanization of a non-human character or idea. Unlike the previous two participants, Sinarynn does not have an overarching lore, but her VTuber model translates her cultural identity as she wants to pay homage to her homeland. Sinarynn was the only VTuber in the focus group with tan skin, which she also has in real life. She believed that the representation of people of color is important, too.

With multiple VTubers as a single *Nakanohito*, Vinerra mentioned that her previous VTuber brand, LeighCandy, used free models from VRoid Studio, an application for 3D humanoid models. However, LeighCandy did not have access to the proper equipment or application necessary to maximize the 3D capabilities of these models; as such, Live2D has become an option for her and those in a similar situation.

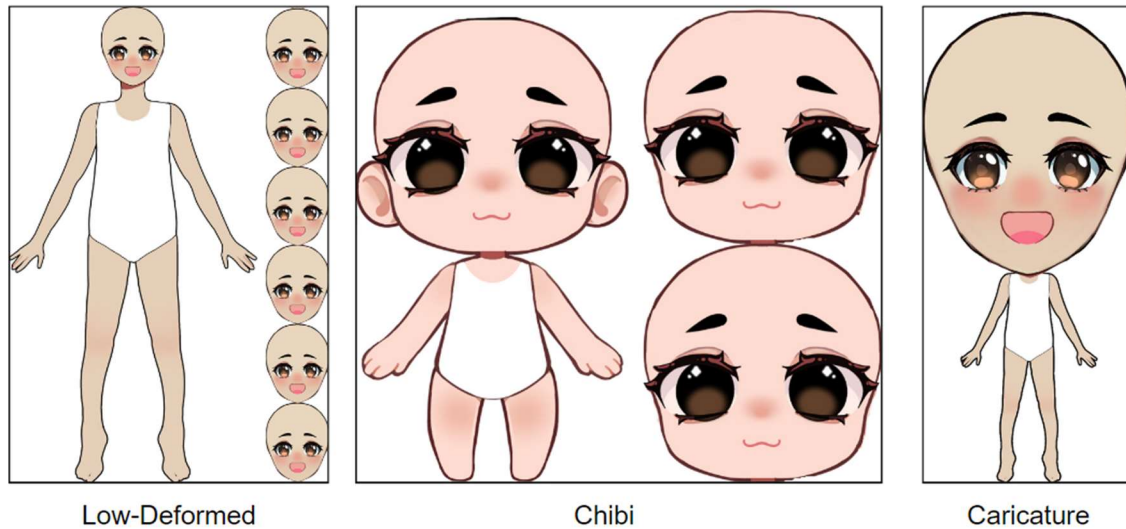
Other than the branding, lore was also a significant component of VTuber's brand identity, but it was not required. The focus group's models integrate their ideal lore aspects. A *Nakanohito* may include cultural experiences in their lore to integrate themselves into their personas without directly explaining or exposing their personal life. They considered that brand identities can be flexible and not permanently fixed. Having many models with various backstories as a VTuber is acceptable.

According to the focus group, models in chibi form could create a feeling of comfort, relaxation, and cuteness for their viewers. They found its nature similar to how colors convey mood. People perceive chibi characters as adorable, sweet, and childlike, whereas the audience can perceive low-deformed characters as mature. Chibis could also represent a specific gaming style, such as retro, or may serve as a small gag in anime.

Designing Live2D models in chibi form was simpler than the traditional low-deformed models. The chibi style, also known as super-deformed (S.D.), has approximately 1:2 tounshin, often used in derivative depictions, merchandise, or special promotions. Reducing certain features, such as clothing, was necessary when redesigning a character to a chibi form.

Chibi models also follow a uniform size and shape regardless of gender and emphasize the most important features. Uniformity became a foundation for the study, as all the models used one base model as a foundation. As a result, rigging in chibi is ideally less complex than low-deformed.

The focus group perceived that chibi avatars have no significant disadvantages and were currently popular products that VTubers want to commission from artists.



*Figure 3. Proportion Ratio Between Art Deformation Styles*

Figure 3 showed the approximate proportion ratio changes between the deformation styles. Chibi is still a caricature style, but it must emphasize the cuteness of a character rather than simply enlarging its head. Most of the features resemble childish traits relating to *moe*. This information defined the standards for designing the chibi Live2D models of the study.

Ideation was the next step of the Design Thinking Process (1969). It is the phase of conceptualizing and sketching the ideas. Ideation was the main foundation before prototyping.

The participants stated they don't have high expectations for the chibi Live2D. They only wanted to see the model move nicely and were looking forward to the backstage end of the design process. The focus group suggested seven toggles for

the chibi Live2D models: (1) eyes that showed heart pupils; faces that indicated (2) sadness, (3) crying, (4) excitement, (5) anger, and (6) death, and (7) a waving hand toggle. Furthermore, Yabi wanted to see her chibi hold a giant drink of the participants' choice, preferably boba.

### Design Process Model

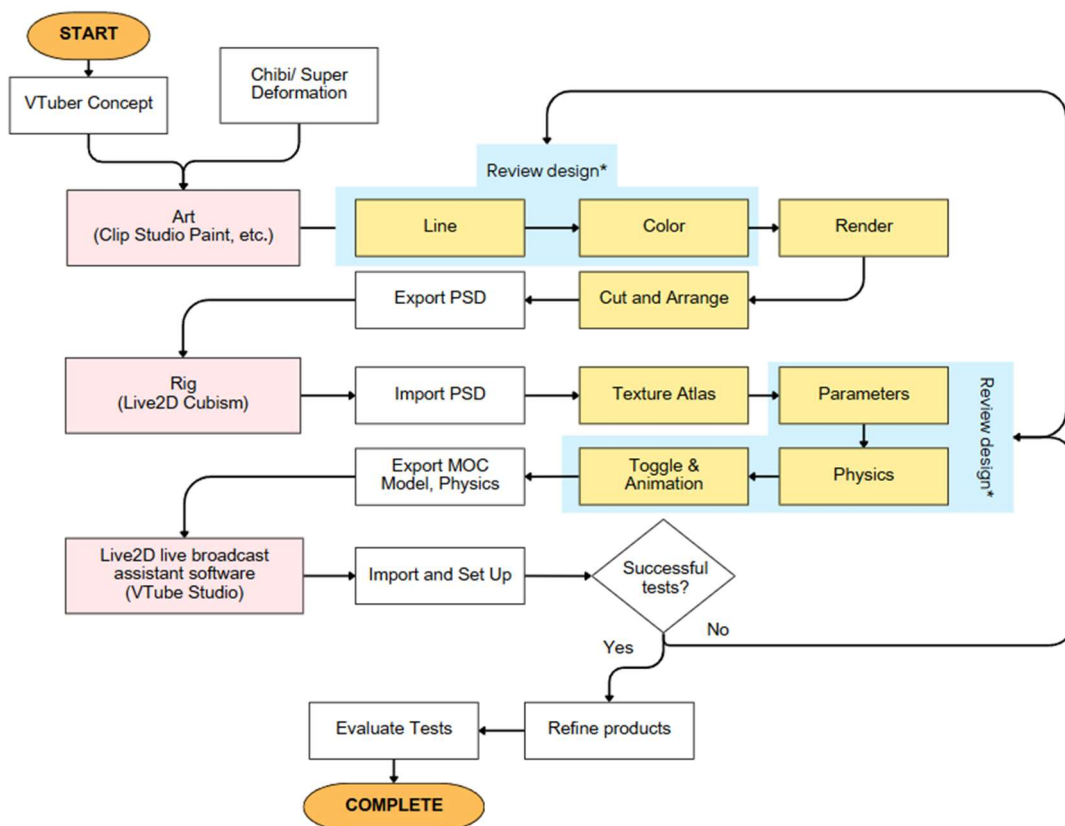


Figure 4. Design Process of Chibi Live2D Model (Badlon, 2024)

To streamline the process of the chibi Live2D models, I created the design process shown in Figure 4. After the entire design process, the participants mentioned it is essential to review the designs during the line and color stages of illustrating the

models. Addressing the errors of a model art during these phases could avoid later problems and extra revisions.

Animation errors could come from the phases of setting the parameters and physics during the rigging phase. Parameters are a system or set of conditions that create the movement of a model in Live2D cubism. Parameters are for setting movement commands used for expression toggles or animation. On the other hand, physics uses the parameters and additional operations to simulate realistic animation within the model. Notably, the participants mostly observed the model's bouncy physics, movement range, and toggles.

### Art Phase

The next phase was designing the chibi Live2D model prototypes. In art, a line is a moving point in space. For illustrations, creating a line of sketches or shapes is the backbone of the entire idea. The sketch seen in Figure 5 served as a guide during the illustration process before finalizing the line art stage.

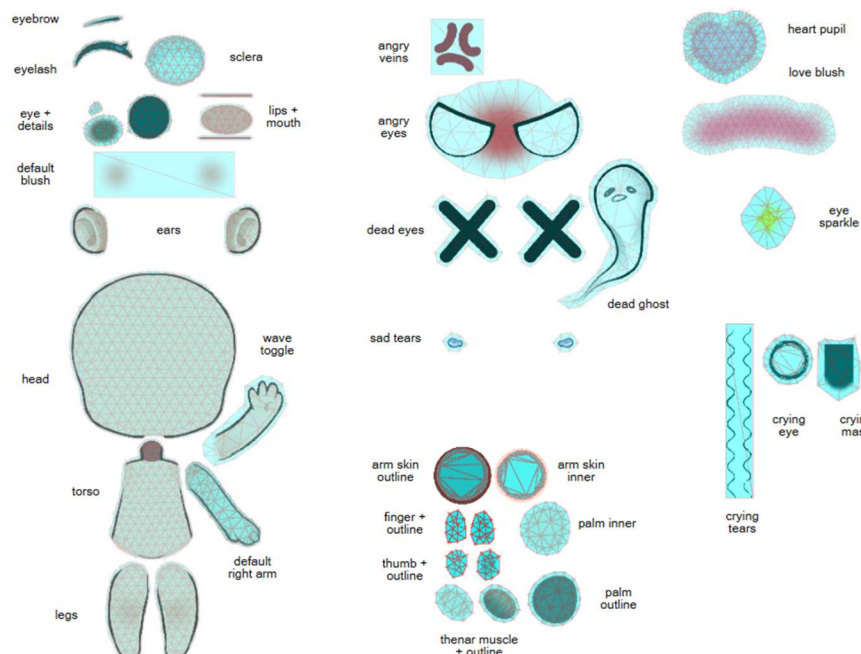
Afterward, I properly cut the illustrations so that the source images of the model move accordingly during the rigging phase of the Live2D model. The coloring phase involved setting the base colors while rendering in an illustration focuses on adding highlights, shading, and other layer modes to make it feel complete.



*Figure 5. Sketch, Source Image, and Guide Image of the Base Model*

Hence, the initial sketches during the art phase weren't usually included in the Photoshop File (PSD) imported to Live2D Cubism. The PSD contains the data for the texture atlas – a plane containing the data of the model's illustration and art meshes from several smaller images packed together. The texture atlas helped in minimizing the data size.

The Live2D Cubism divided the imported PSD images into two levels of data structure: (1) model guide image and (2) source image. Model guide images are temporary unstructured data that help riggers with the keyframing process. On the other hand, the source image contains data that preserves the layer hierarchy, layer information, and the final look of the model on the imported PSD image. From this, the process continued to the rigging phase.



*Figure 6. Texture Atlas of Final Base Model with Labels*

## Rig Phase

Before the sampling method was conducted, the digital publication material for finding the participants included a sample preview of the chibi Live2D model to help interested VTubers with their expectations for the study. However, I only finalized the models after conducting the initial interview with the participants. Designing the final base model took about two (2) months within the design creation.

**Table 4**

*VTuber Base Model Iterations*

						
Date	March 15	March 24	April 1	April 9	April 15	May 14
Notes	Live2D Model Preview		Removed Bottom Lashes		Hand tracking	Final Base

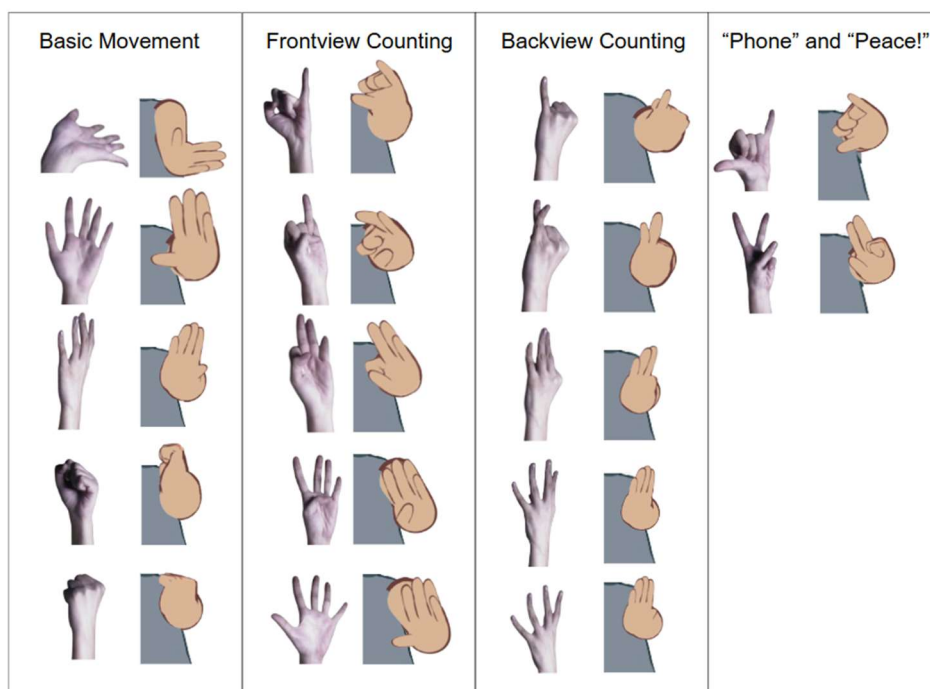
The project mostly focused on the Base Model as the foundation of all the chibi forms implemented for all the VTuber designs in this project. It took several attempts to create a design that would work across all designs. Having a base model ready reduced the amount of work required. Riggers could replace textures in Live2D Cubism, which I used the most during the rigging process to reduce repetitive steps and increase efficiency. Table 4 depicts the base model's most significant design changes during this process.

**Table 5***Chibi Live2D Model Statistics*

	<b>Base</b>	<b>Sinarynn</b>	<b>Vinerra</b>	<b>YabiVT</b>
Common Data				
Parts	37	42	49	47
Deformer Data				
Warp Deformers	43	67	66	63
Rotation Deformers	45	57	61	51
Interpolations in Deformers	559	705	690	669
Deformers with Only One Draw Element	15	18	21	19
Deformers with Only One Deformer	26	35	38	30
Deformers with No Content	0	0	0	0
ArtMesh Related				
ArtMesh	84	116	118	119
Interpolation ArtMesh	268	430	411	522
Vertices	4177	4259	6087	5435
Polygons	6246	5990	8545	7689
ArtPath	0	0	0	0
ArtPath's control points	0	0	0	0
Relating to Clipping Masks				
Clippings used	16	15	14	14
Mask ID permutation types	7	7	7	7
Objects with moc3 output issues	0	0	0	0

Table 5 showed the model statistics per Live2D model created in the study. It was important to note that the values for “Deformers with No Content” and “Objects with moc3 output issue” should result in 0 to lessen the file size and avoid model errors. Furthermore, the data for “Art Path” and its control points were also null as these tend to make the files larger.

### Hand Tracking



*Figure 7. Hand Tracking Movement*

While researching L2D rigging, I discovered Sinuuki’s (2022) advanced hand rigging process. Although it was not initially intended for this research, I implemented it to fill the gap between hand-tracking and the exploration of animation techniques in Lehtovirta’s (2023) study. By employing this technique, I explored whether Live2D models possess any additional strengths that can challenge those of 3D models, especially on technologies for embodied acting. Hand tracking in VTube Studio

requires only an additional webcam to detect the users' hands. For it to function properly, hands should be visible within the camera view. If the camera or the application fails to detect the hands, it reverts to the default position.

### Implementation Phase

The last phase in prototyping a chibi Live2D model was implementing the brand identities to the base Live2D model. Figure 8 indicated a work-in-progress (WIP) during the art phase. Here, it showed a snippet of how I added the visual features important to the VTuber identities of the focus group.



Figure 8. Work in Progress Design Samples on the Base Model

Table 6

Left-Hand Tracking Sample on Models

Sinarynn	Vinerra Vessali	YabiVT
		

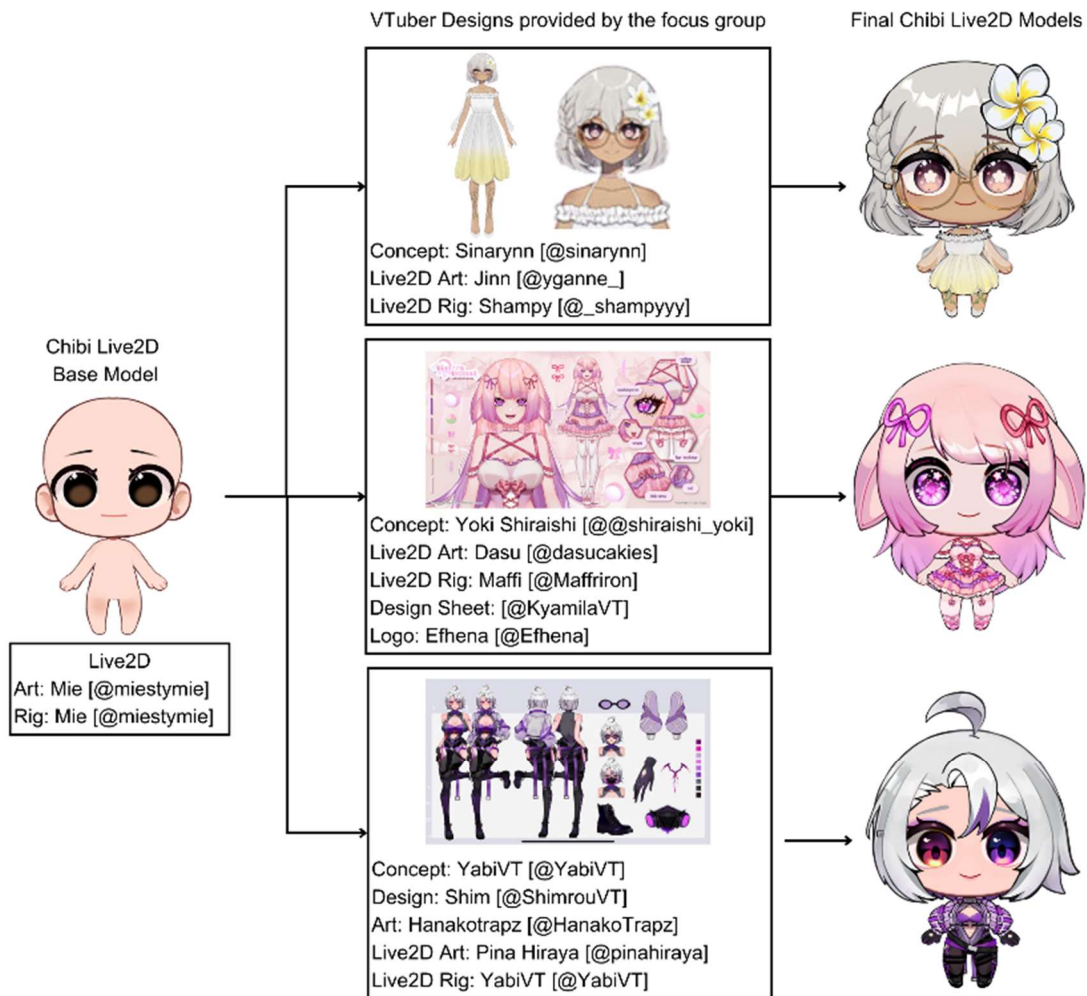


Figure 9. Combining the Base Model with the Focus Group's VTuber Design

Figures 10 to 15 were the model illustrations with design notes and texture atlas for the final product of the chibi Live2D models.

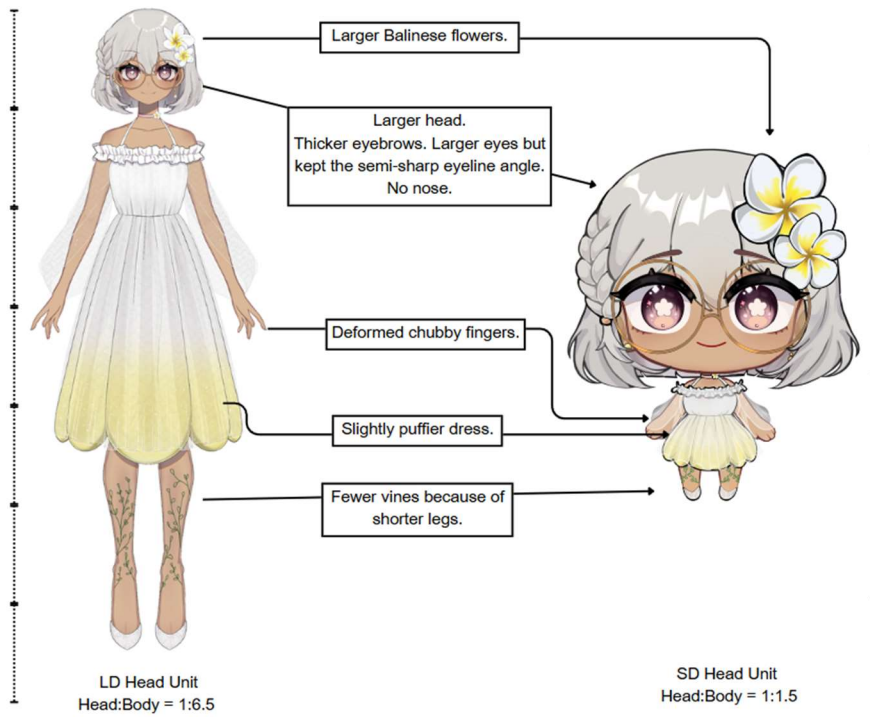


Figure 10. L.D. to S.D. Design Notes for Sinarynn



Figure 11. Texture Atlas for Sinarynn's Chibi Live2D Model

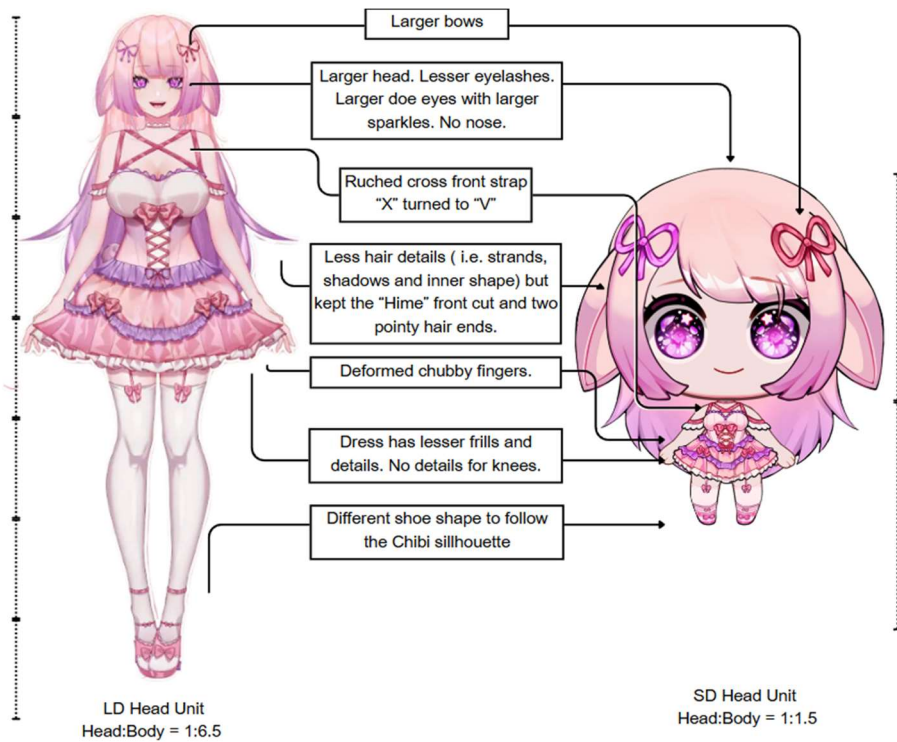


Figure 12. L.D. to S.D. Design Notes for Vinerra Vessali

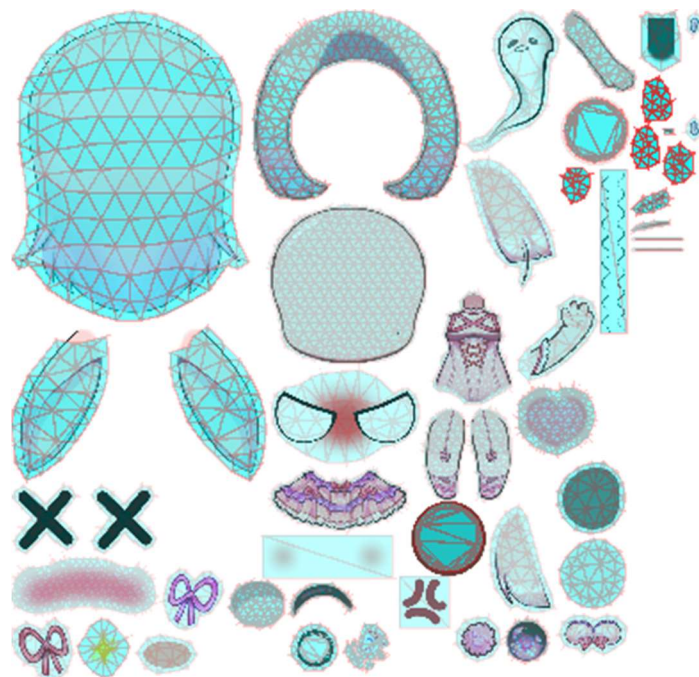


Figure 13. Texture Atlas for Vinerra Vessali's Chibi Live2D Model

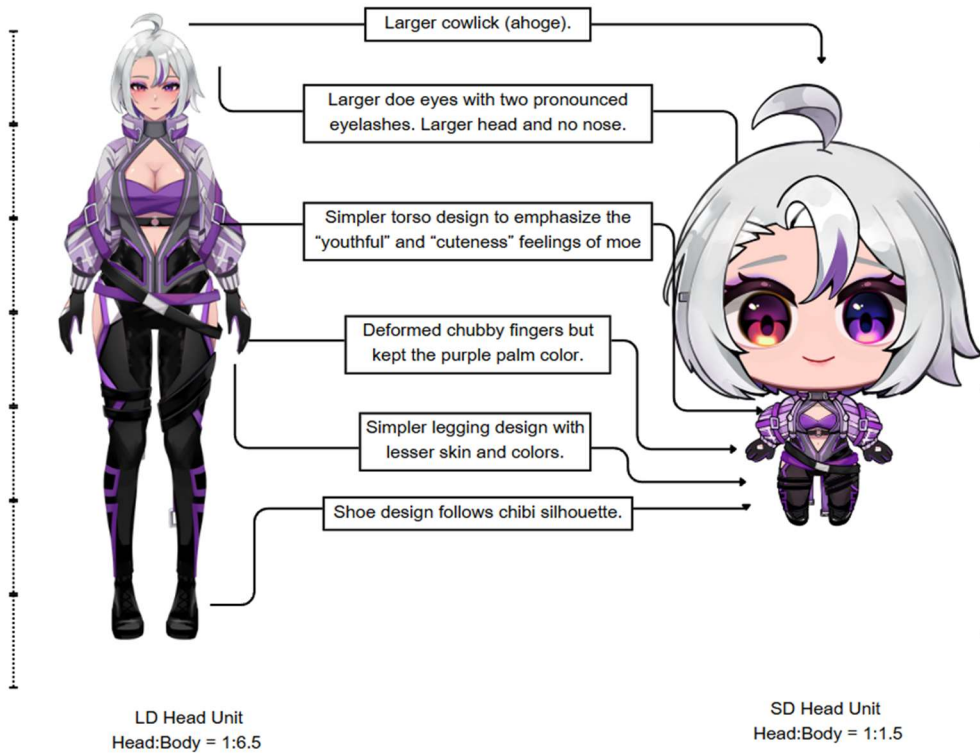


Figure 14. L.D. to S.D. Design Notes for YabiVT








Figure 15. Texture Atlas for YabiVT's Chibi Live2D Model



## Codified Expressions

The focus group suggested seven toggles for the Chibi Live2D models: (1) eyes that showed heart pupils, faces that indicate (2) sadness, (3) crying, (4) excitement, (5) anger, and (6) death, and (7) a waving hand toggle. These recommended toggles were included in the base model's codified expression. Similar to the previous steps, the base model

**Table 7**
















*Expression Toggles on Chibi Live2D Base Model*













Name	Main Parameters Active	Appearance
Love_animation	Ex_HeartToggle (1.0) Ex_HeartPulse (0.0 to 1.0)	
Sad face	Ex_SadToggle (1.0) BrowL Form (-1.0) BrowR Form (-1.0)	
Crying	Ex_SadToggle (1.0) BrowL Form (-1.0) BrowR Form (-1.0)	
Excited	Ex_ExcitedToggle (1.0)	
Angry face	Ex_AngryToggle (1.0) Ex_AngryAnimation (0.0 to 1.0) BrowL Form (1.0) BrowR Form (1.0)	

Name	Main Parameters Active	Appearance
Dead face	Ex_DeadToggle (1.0) Ex_DeadAnimation (0.0 to 1.0)	
Wave	Ex_WaveToggle (0.0, 0.5 to 1.0)	

**Table 8**

*Expression Toggles on Focus Group's Models*

Sinarynn	Vinerra Vessali	YabiVT	Toggle Name	Action
			Wave	Play Animation
			Angry	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Dead	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Excited	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Heart Eyes	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)

Sinarynn	Vinerra Vessali	YabiVT	Toggle Name	Action
	N/A		Glasses/ Goggles	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Cry	Play Animation
N/A	N/A		Mask	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Sad Tears	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)
			Bald	Set/Unset Expression (exp3)

The study successfully implemented the suggestion for the chibi models to an object like a huge drink. This suggestion was turned into a “Pinned Item,” where a separate model file can be attached to the model on VTube studio and let the VTuber play with it creatively and freely. The finalized Pinned Items were a huge purple boba drink, a pink boba drink, and a Balinese flower.

**Table 9**

*Pinned Items Customized for Each Participant*

Sinarynn	Vinerra Vessali	YabiVT
		

**Live2D Model Showcases**

In the VTubing space, riggers produce Live2D model showcases to introduce the models to new potential customers. These showcases can also gain indirect insights from the focus group’s audience and give them another perspective in understanding the impact of Chibi Live2D models. To conclude the implementation phase of this project, I shared the Live2d showcases on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. The Live2D model showcases garnered the most attention on Twitter, taking into consideration that I didn’t receive enough analytics from the other social media sites. Sinarynn and Vinerra have quote-tweeted their respective models, which may have contributed to the traction. The Twitter data were tallied on July 12, 2024.

**Table 10**

*Live2D Model Showcases and Engagement Analytics on Twitter*

Data	Sinarynn	Vinerra Vessali	YabiVT
Date tweeted	June 7, 2024	June 9, 2024	June 14, 2024
Impressions	898	1673	2441
Engagements	219	136	97

In Table 10, impressions are the number of times the posts were directly viewed on the platform. Engagements are the total number of times a user has interacted with the post, which covers all clicks on the post, including those on the hashtags, links, avatar, username, post-expansion, likes, reposts, replies, and follows. These analytics, however, only supplement the data from the focus group's interview statements, as the qualitative data is more important for this study.

### Testing Phase

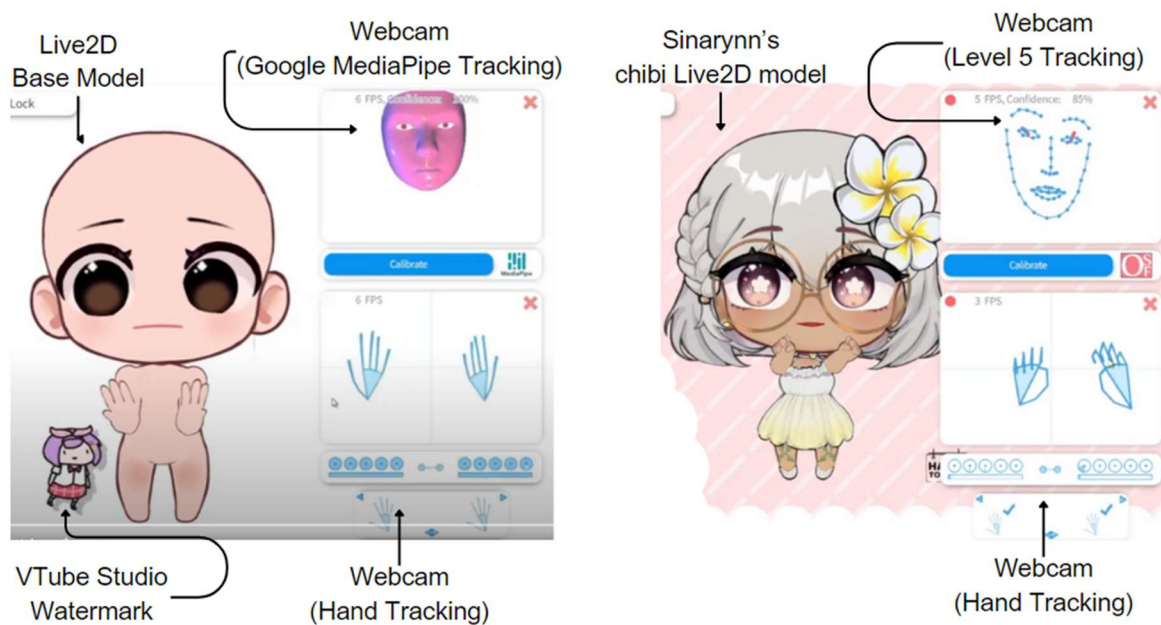


Figure 16. User Interface of VTube Studio

The testing phase was mostly observed on VTube Studio. It is a free application that allows a user or *Nakanohito* to move the Live2D model in real time (Denchisoft, 2021). Figure 16 showed the basic functions that a model needs to move, such as the webcam or iPhone tracking.

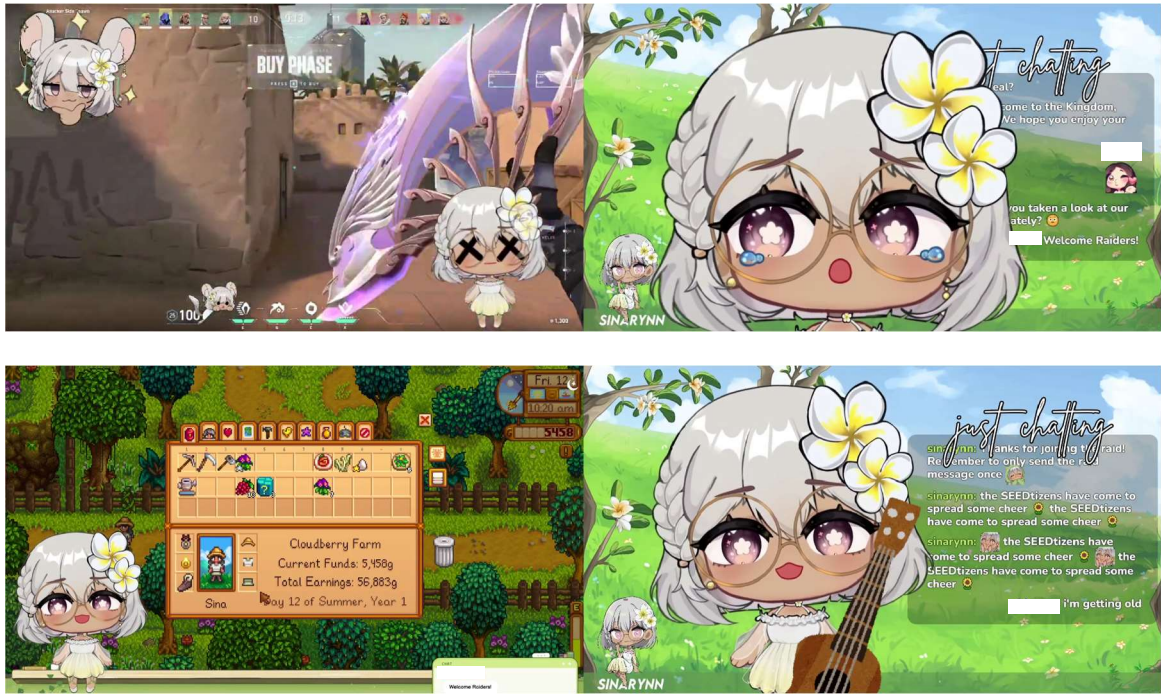


Figure 17. Test Stream by Sinarynn on May 17, 2024

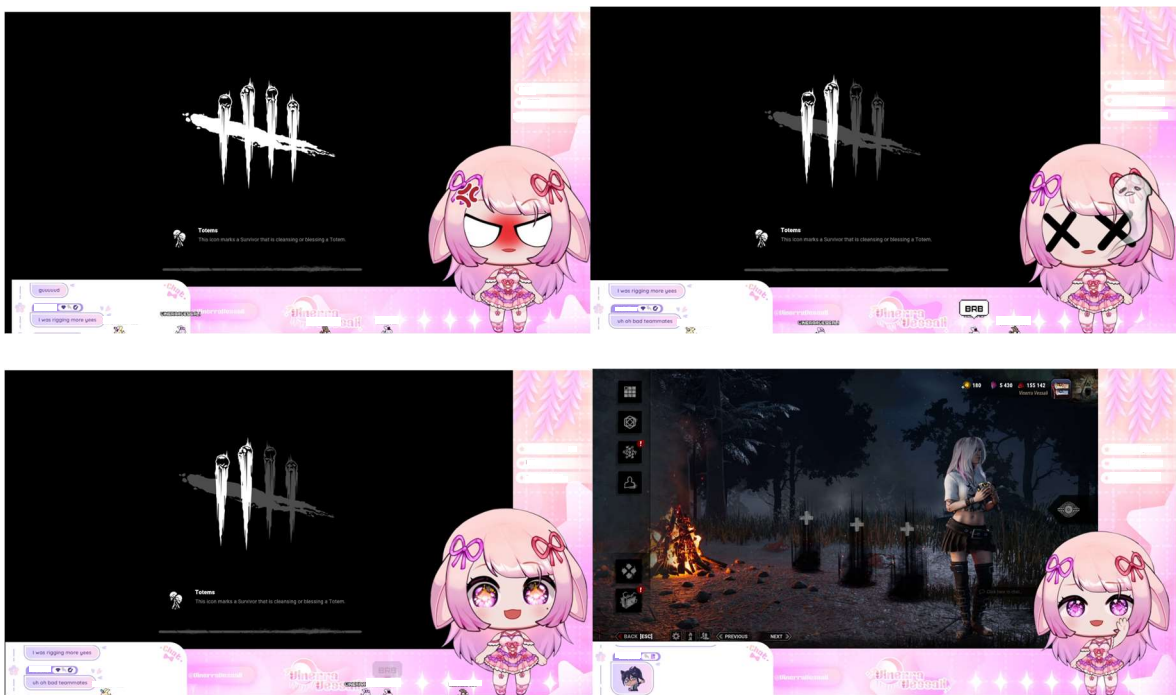


Figure 18. Test Stream by Vinerra Vessali on May 22, 2024



Figure 19. Offline Hand Tracking Test by Vinerra Vessali on May 28, 2024

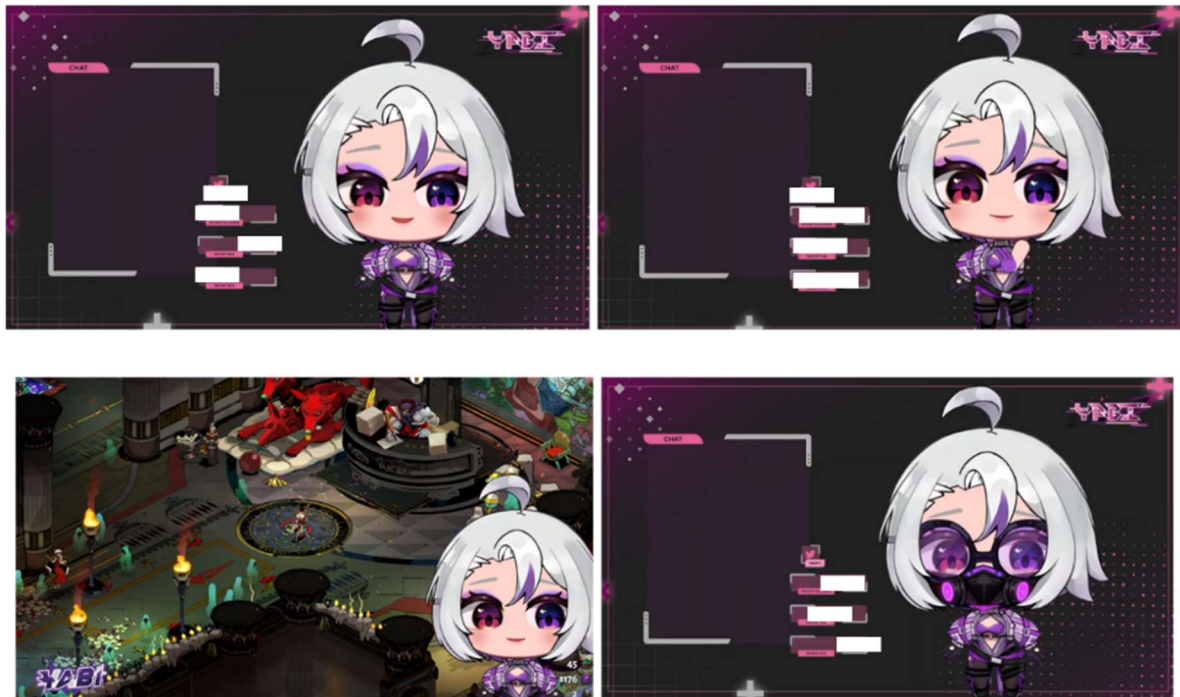


Figure 20. Offline Test by YabiVT on May 29, 2024

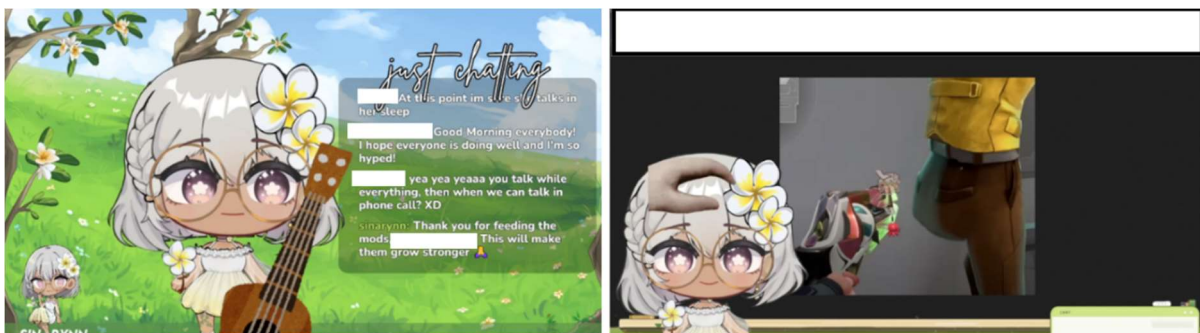
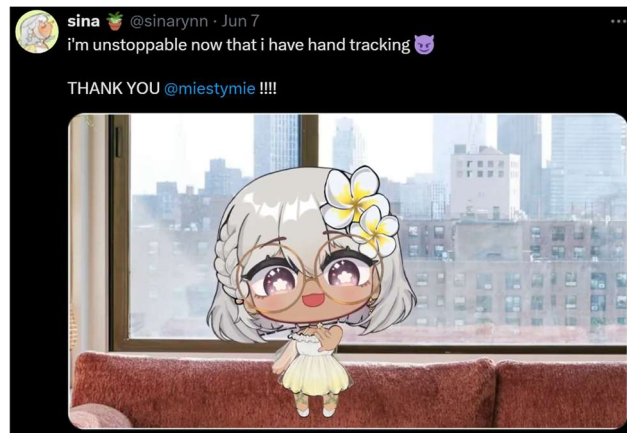


Figure 21. Test Stream by Sinarynn on May 17, 2024



*Figure 22. Tweet of a Hand Tracking Video by Sinarynn on June 7, 2024*

The focus group tested the Chibi Live2D models on the platforms where they were most comfortable. On May 17, 2024, Sinarynn recorded her first live stream, lasting three (3) hours. Her second stream with hand tracking happened on June 10, 2024, lasting for two and a half (2.5) hours.

On May 22, 2024, Vinerra conducted a four-hour stream, testing her chibi Live2D model. On May 28, she performed a hand-tracking test. On the other hand, Yabi's test stream happened offline and lasted for seven (7) minutes. The chibi model was also used again on her online stream for a few minutes.

The participants used the models with the content that they planned or scheduled to do that day. Their comments on the model are generally positive overall, with few suggestions for enhancing the movement rigging and source images.

### **The Focus Group's Feedback to The Chibi Live2d Model**

All participants provided overwhelmingly positive feedback on the chibi models. They consistently observed that the models exceeded their expectations, describing them as bouncy, cute, beautiful, and an accurate replica of their characters. The hand-

tracking feature surprised them, as it is relatively uncommon for 2D models in the VTubing community, adding to the model's uniqueness.

While there were no unnecessary features, some aspects could be improved. For example, Sinarynn's model features a darker skin tone, highlighting the need for more care and attention to the details of a broader range of skin colors. The codified blush color appeared vivid for her skin tone, and a more natural blush shade for brown skin would have been preferable. Fortunately, this could be easily adjusted in VTube Studio by modifying the static multiplier and screen colors on the user's end. However, addressing this during the initial coloring process would have been more user-friendly.

Other improvements for the models involved designing better physics for details and expanding the range of body and facial movements. Participants acknowledged that the project used a base model that limited customization options. A participant described the process as a kind of 'Your-Character-Here' (YCH) template. YCHs are popular keywords in the VTuber market, where artists use a specific base or template for their digital products. It is common for illustrations, emotes, and animated artworks to have a YCH variation as it can lessen the repetitive process of creating digital artwork.

When I presented the map of the Design Process for designing a chibi Live2D model, Sinarynn realized how much work goes into putting a model together. The focus group perceived that the Design Process map is beneficial for VTuber clients, helping them understand the current stage of the model and the various processes involved, especially for clients with little to no background knowledge.

Vinerra mentioned that revisions typically occur during the line art stage, as it's easier to make changes before moving on to coloring. The color stage should prioritize accuracy in both base colors and shading. Once these two stages are approved, most

artists generally do not allow further changes during the revisions stage. However, the specific phases may also be influenced by the artist's approach.

On the other hand, the rigging process involved gathering opinions from the client regarding the toggle and animation stages. Only after receiving the client's green light should the model be exported to the Model Data (MOC) file for the VTuber's use. Riggers often use services like Google Drive to share MOC files, although individual artists and riggers may have different approaches. Some riggers simply send out the MOC file, while others assist in setting up parameters within the Live2D live broadcast assistant software.

### **The Influence of Chibi Live2D Models As An Entertainment Branding Tool**

Overall, the focus group enjoyed their experience using the chibi Live2D models during their streams. However, two participants initially felt overwhelmed by the chibi Live2D model. Still, this experience gave them a unique opportunity to view the models from another artist's perspective. After all, individual artists often bring distinct art styles to their work.

Sinarynn, in particular, expressed that the chibi Live2D model from this project is one of her favorites and plans to use it more frequently in other cozy games, as it sets the right mood. Vinerra highlighted that using the chibi Live2D model allows her to showcase a different facet of her content creator persona without altering the core elements her viewers recognize. Notably, their audiences pointed out the differences in the atmosphere between the models, even though they share the same underlying details. They perceived the chibi model's expressions as softer, cuter, and overall imbued with a cozy, relaxed vibe. Hence, the models were a perfect fit for those 'chill' moments.

The focus group's portrayal of personas while in control of the chibi models could be explained by applying Erving Goffman's (1959) Theory of Self-Presentation. Both Vinerra and Sinarynn felt that they innately acted slightly differently compared to when using their less-deformed models. Subconsciously, they created and adopted new personas while using the chibi model, influenced by their self-perception, which led them to act in a 'cutesier' manner. While reviewing the Video-on-Demand (VOD) footage, Sinarynn noticed that she spoke in a higher pitch and used more 'baby talk' when interacting with the chat. She described her embodied acting as livelier and reminiscent of an excited toddler.

Vinerra's *unseasonness* remained largely consistent. In the VTubing community, '*unseiso*' is a slang term borrowed from the Japanese word '*seiso*,' which means clean, wholesome, or pure. When combined with the prefix 'un,' '*unseiso*' emphasizes opposite qualities — vulgarity, indecency, and crassness. Vulgarity was also present when all participants used hand tracking to humorously show their middle fingers to the audience. Furthermore, Vinerra felt the need to use larger movements to make her embodied acting more pronounced when using the chibi model, similar to Sinarynn's bouncy demeanor. Both Vinerra and Sinarynn didn't anticipate acting childish, especially since they also used their normal voice with the chibi model.

On the other hand, YabiVT's behavior remained unchanged while using the model, as she did not prioritize creating a distinct persona in her VTubing activities. As she succinctly put it, '*Whoever I am in real life also reflects how I use VTube models.*' This statement held for all participants, regardless of whether they consciously crafted a new persona, as their activities occur 'backstage.' The VTubers created a mental conceptualization of the people with whom they are communicating since the viewers cannot be physically present with them. Unless intentionally

adopting a persona, this scenario typically compelled VTubers to be authentic and exhibit their true selves in the space where they feel most comfortable.

While the reception from their audience was mostly positive, two participants also felt uncomfortable with specific statements. Sinarynn found herself uneasy when a few viewers assumed she was a child while using the chibi Model. Another viewer described her chibi model versus the non-chibi model as a 'kid growing up.' This characterization felt strange for the participant as someone in their mid-twenties. Additionally, Sinarynn received comments expressing a preference for her low-deformed model, described as the 'Big' Sinarynn. She firmly believed that preferring and insulting others' art is immature behavior and that change sometimes brings out the worst in people.

Although, it's worth noting that she had only hinted at the chibi model once or twice without any teasers. Typically, model debuts are promoted weeks or months in advance, but this study had limited preparation time. Despite this, Sinarynn felt a sense of duty as a community organizer to ensure respectful treatment for her artists. She feared that if she took a comedic approach, people might not take her seriously. Given the nature of VTuber models, establishing boundaries that are genuinely respected can be challenging. Consequently, VTubers occasionally step out of their entertaining front-stage act to assert these boundaries.

Vinerra faced similar criticisms, but she didn't interpret them entirely negatively. Some viewers felt that her vulgarity didn't align with the chibi model's cuteness. Nevertheless, she continued with her *unseiso* VTuber performance because it felt most authentic to her. Vinerra believed her regular viewers were already aware of this aspect. Rather than viewing the mismatch negatively, she found the mismatch between cuteness and vulgarity entertaining.

Beyond those aspects, the focus group emphasized the positive audience reception. People were enamored and laughed along when Sinarynn playfully showed her middle finger to her chat. Like Vinerra's statement, there's a comedic irony with the mismatch in having a cute model that occasionally exhibits signs of vulgarity. Sinarynn also highlighted another comment from a friend who loved how rotund the model appeared. Another chatter mentioned that the chibi model's design resembled what Sinarynn might look like as a doll. This feedback even sparked Sinarynn's desire to have a doll based on the same model.

The focus group found themselves bombarded with endearing comments. "*You look so adorable, I wanna bite you! You're so squishy and cute! I'm gonna melt! Too cute. I don't trust you. I refer to this as... Deceptively adorable!*" Additionally, audience members tagged their friends and encouraged them to consider getting a similar model, "*So cute! You should get one of these models!*"

After their presentation with the chibi models, Vinerra and Sinarynn received secondary derivative works from their community. Sinarynn stated, "I'm not sure if it's a fanmade recreation, but someone created a height comparison between me and their character." Vinerra received artwork inspired by the chibi model. Although YabiVT's chibi model made the fewest appearances on stream due to scheduling conflicts, she reported no negative feedback. She's enthusiastic about using it more, hoping her community will start creating memes with it as well.

## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

The study aimed to create a functional and appealing chibi Live2D model based on the established brand identity of the participating nano-influencers. It sought to assess the relationship, determine the impacts, and describe the design process and interpersonal connections behind the participants' utilization of the chibi Live2D models, particularly as an entertainment branding tool.

Moreover, the study investigated how VTubers utilized the chibi Live2D models. It answered how nano-influencers and designers perceive and describe the creation process of chibi Live2D models. Lastly, it explained the experiences, perceptions, and impact of chibi Live2D models as an entertainment branding tool for the participants.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, in which the data procured are the findings from synchronous in-depth interviews factoring the front-stage behavior and satisfaction of the participants with the created chibi Live2D models as multimedia products. Moreover, observational techniques, like video analysis, and autoethnography are employed to identify and explain the contributing backstage variables in Live2D models as a branding tool for nano-influencers in social entertainment.

The study successfully created a functional and appealing chibi Live2D model based on the established brand identity of the participating nano-influencers. Hence, the study also addressed the design process by creating a streamlined map while gathering the interpersonal connections of the participants behind their utilization of the chibi Live2D models. The creation of Live2D models took about four months with numerous reiterations. In summary, the chibi Live2D models received a generally positive impact satisfaction as an engagement tool for the nano-influencer VTubers.

## Conclusion

The study successfully attained its objectives of creating, assessing, and determining the impact of chibi Live2D models as an entertainment branding tool for nano-influencer VTubers.

The study focused on the influence of Live2D model designs on the self-presentation and brand identity of VTubers. Specifically, it highlighted the impact of chibi, a super-deformed drawing style emphasizing the character design's cuteness. The study also examined the branding and social influence of VTubers, particularly nano-influencers - social media content creators with a lesser following but with a highly engaged audience based on the social media influence hierarchy.

Moreover, the study investigated how VTubers utilized the chibi Live2D Models, designed to fit the brand identity of the streamer, and how it can become a tool for social engagement for their community and target audience. The research also aimed to answer the following questions:

The study employed a qualitative research approach, in which the data procured are the findings from synchronous in-depth interviews factoring the front-stage behavior and satisfaction of the participants with the created chibi Live2D models as multimedia products. Moreover, observational techniques, like video analysis, and autoethnography are employed to identify and explain the contributing backstage variables in Live2D models as a branding tool for nano-influencers in social entertainment.

The study aimed to answer three major questions. First, how do nano-influencers and designers perceive and describe the process of creating chibi Live2D models for social media branding? Second, what are the experiences and perceptions

of nano-influencers regarding their use of chibi Live2D models in their social media content? Lastly, what is the impact of chibi Live2D models, particularly as an entertainment branding tool and visual identity, on the experiences of the participating nano-influencers?

These research questions were answered through a qualitative research approach, in which the findings were collected from autoethnography, in-depth interviews, and observational methods of video analysis.

I served as the main designer, illustrator, and animator of the chibi Live2D models and recorded how lengthy and repetitive the processes were through autoethnography. Designing a base model is a great hack for redesigning multiple models in a short amount of time. However, it wouldn't be enough to show the brand identities of the VTubers, as each persona has its unique aesthetic. The participants agreed that the design process map shown in Figure 4 is beneficial for VTuber clients, artists, and riggers, as it can help them navigate and understand the current stage of the model. The foundations of character design heavily rely on the line art and coloring stage, while most clients would send the most opinions on the toggle and animation stage. Furthermore, it is also to miss the details of skin color and physics to elements repeated like the eyes.

The experiences and perceptions of nano-influencers regarding the chibi Live2D models in their social media content are overwhelmingly positive. Two participants—Sinarynn and Vinerra—initially felt overwhelmed by the chibi Live2D model, while some of their audience members compared them to being a child. They also expressed that the model gave them a new persona visible through their speech and movement. On the other hand, YabiVT didn't create a new persona. Hence, the front stage personas only exist if the Nakanohitos are comfortable with it. The

audiences also pointed out the differences in the atmosphere between the low-deformed and chibi models, even though they share the same underlying details.

In conclusion, having an additional model, especially in chibi form, can effectively promote an influencer's brand identity. Some VTubers instinctively reacted to the model's visual appearance, hence, it became easier for them to develop a new persona spontaneously. The chibi Live2D models successfully served as a medium for social engagement among nano-influencer VTubers, inspiring community members to create discussions, fan art, or memes in response. To further enhance the VTuber experience, a database of memorable facial expressions proves a valuable feature for the users, as it can set the tone for certain visual gags. Additionally, models with interactive features like hand tracking or body physics highlighted the *Nakanohitos'* ability to convey figurative expressions through voice and movement, deepening their connection with the audience. Every participant wished to utilize the models developed for this project in their upcoming streams. The project was successful in designing an appealing and effective chibi avatar.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results, future scholars undertaking a capstone project of a similar nature should consider employing the methods used in this project. The participants felt that spending time directly with the VTubers for whom you will create models is crucial. The key to a model's effectiveness lies in its ability to capture how people's expression's function, enhancing the interactive nature of streams.

When creating avatars for others, it is strongly advised to reevaluate the number of toggles a model requires, especially if designed from scratch, to ensure

consistently high-quality models. Excessive toggles can lead to more layers, potentially lengthening the rigging process and complicating problem resolution.

Additionally, gaining insights from VTuber model artists or riggers is valuable, as different artists and riggers approach models based on their unique experiences, specializations, and priorities. Researching these aspects provides a holistic view of the process. At the same time, future research can also take into consideration these insights from artists and riggers that may contribute to the process and perception of chibi and L2Ds in the VTubing sphere.

Furthermore, aside from the Live2D models, future studies could investigate other multimedia products like stingers, overlays, illustrations, and more. These assets also strengthen the brand identity of a social media influencer.

Although the study was strictly designed for an approximate three-month period, other studies with a longer duration can focus on studying the audience perception of the models as a longitudinal study. Data perception could consider observing the audience's perspectives on the results not only based on the comments. Studying the audience's perceptions can improve how content creators and social media influencers innovate their content.

Exploring gender-related aspects can also deepen the understanding of VTubing. Notably, this study lacked non-conventional forms like *babiniku* (male performers using female avatars) and heteronormative male participants. Further research can be conducted on the experiences of male VTubers—either presenting as male personas or using female avatars—regarding chibi L2D in their streams.

Moreover, the lack of literature on the growing community of Filipino VTubers presents a local research opportunity. Understanding their viewpoints and delving into

cultural beliefs could inspire character designs and new media artworks based on Filipino folklore for VTubers.

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## ANNEXES

## Appendix A

### Ethics Certificate



Figure 23. Certificate of Completion for TCPS 2: Core 2022

## Appendix B

**Table 11**

*Tentative Schedule Outline*

Term	Date	Phase	Outputs
1	Oct 2, 2023, to Mar 04, 2024	0: Capstone proposal and materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Approved proposal.</li> <li>● Digital publication material</li> <li>● Questionnaire guidelines</li> <li>● Chibi L2D prototype</li> <li>● List of potential participants</li> </ul>
2	Mar 04 to Mar 18, 2024	1: Finding a focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A focus group of three nano-influencer VTubers</li> </ul>
2	Mar 15 to Apr 30, 2024	2: Ideate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Start the design process</li> </ul>
2-3	Apr 04 to Jul 29, 2024	3: Implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In-depth interviews</li> <li>● Observational data</li> <li>● Autoethnography</li> </ul>
2-3	Apr 25 to Jun 11, 2024	4: Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final Live2D models</li> <li>● Synthesized qualitative data (test results)</li> </ul>
3	Jun 12 to Jul 22, 2024	5: Synthesize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● End of Design Process</li> <li>● Final capstone manuscript</li> </ul>

The initial plan was modified to consider the obstacles and conditions to ensure the implementation of the project. The study proceeded as follows:

Phase 1. Identification of the Focus group: I posted the digital publication material on Facebook and Twitter. The post showed a chibi L2D model preview, description, and link redirected to the survey form. The attachments set the expected limitations. Afterward is the purposive sampling of sufficient participants.

Phase 2. Initial Interview: After finalizing the focus group, I gathered pre-analysis qualitative data, which consists of interview statements that provide the sample group's experiences as VTubers before conducting the test streams.

Phase 3. Chibi L2D Design process: The art for the model was designed on Clip Studio Paint Ex 2.0 and exported as a Photoshop File. I did the rigging process on Live2D Cubism versions 4 to 5. Similarly, this study followed a similar method to Lehtovirta's study (2023), which utilized Simon's (1969) Design Thinking. The focus group conducted the testing stage on their preferred streaming platforms.

Phase 4. Final Interview: For the final in-depth interview, I interviewed the focus group about their utilization experiences and input towards the design process of the chibi L2D.

## Appendix C

### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sinarynn: <https://www.twitch.tv/sinarynn>

Vinerra Vessali: <https://www.twitch.tv/vinerravessali>

YabiVT: <https://www.twitch.tv/yabivt>

### LIST OF CONTENT

miestymie (Official Artist/ Animator Landing Page): <https://miestymie.carrd.co/>

miestymie (Twitter/X): <https://x.com/miestymie/>

miestymie (Instagram): <https://www.instagram.com/miestymie/>

### CHIBI LIVE2D SHOWCASE VIDEOS

Sinarynn (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcb9iJtx2Ys>

Sinarynn (Twitter/X): <https://x.com/miestymie/status/1798967530893246698>

Vinerra Vessali (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFI17D9uXu4>

Vinerra Vessali (Twitter/X): <https://x.com/miestymie/status/1799600698986000859>

YabiVT (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksu4s6q1DLI>

YabiVT (Twitter): <https://x.com/miestymie/status/1801616309916156258>

### DOCUMENTATION VIDEOS

Rigging and Model Tests Documentation Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDbY0yPrcDBUGY2v90JUjMhvAT6cTcMmL>

### USER TESTING VIDEOS BY THE FOCUS GROUP:

First Chibi Stream by Sinarynn: [twitch.tv/videos/2156627961?filter=all&sort=time](https://www.twitch.tv/videos/2156627961?filter=all&sort=time)

First Chibi Stream by Vinerra Vessali: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N4HZXXWklc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N4HZXXWklc)

Offline Stream Test by YabiVT: <https://youtu.be/MRpIWfBeSEw>

Offline hand tracking test by Vinerra Vessali: <https://youtu.be/TAs8nGNflkE>

Hand tracking by Sinarynn: <https://x.com/sinarynn/status/1799087913462075565>

## Appendix D

### Purposive Sampling Method



*Figure 24. Digital Publication Calling for Research Participants*

Good day! I am Marie Chessrine Badlon (@miestymie), a senior student of B.A. Multimedia Studies from the University of the Philippines Open University. As part of a requirement for MMS 200 - Special Project, I am looking for three participants as my focus group. The research aimed to understand the independent nano influencers' user experience and perceived audience engagement with chibi Live2D models.

I kindly ask for approximately 30 minutes of your time to answer the questionnaire with utmost honesty. All private information (eg. email addresses, real names, locations, identifications, etc.) will be kept confidential and only available to the researchers. The participants are free to withdraw anytime and can ask to omit their answers for this research. Rest assured that the researcher will follow the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and properly dispose of your information when used. Furthermore, the researcher of this study has completed the University of Calgary's Course on Research Ethics Tutorial (CORE) and will adhere to the TCPS2 principles for conducting ethical and conscientious research using persons' personal information. Thank you very much, and God bless.

## **VTuber Requirements**

1. Do you currently have the equipment needed for this research?
2. Are you willing to participate in interviews for this project?
3. Are you willing to participate in stream tests using a chibi Live2D model?
4. Do you have prior experience working with an artist before this research?

## **Identifiable Information**

1. What is your nationality?
2. What is your VTuber name and channel link?
3. What is your Discord ID and username?
4. Do you currently work for a VTuber agency?

## **Background Information: Experience**

1. Did you have experience communicating with an artist/ rigger/ animator?
2. Do you own a Live2D model?
3. When was the last time you streamed?
4. How many followers do you have on your streaming platform?
5. Have you built an identity brand for your VTuber?
6. Do you own a reference model, sheet, or image for your current VTuber?
7. Have you streamed with your physical face as a VTuber before?
8. What are your expectations for the chibi Live2D model for this research?
9. Do you have any concerns or initial recommendations for this research?

Thank you. Please expect an email soon if you are accepted to be part of the focus group for this research project.

## Appendix E

### Initial In-Depth Interview Transcript and Questions

Good day, I am Marie Chessrine Badlon [@miestymie]. Thank you for participating in my research. This is the first of two in-depth synchronous interviews for this research. It consists of semi-structured, open-ended questions about the appeal of VTubing and brand identity. We will only use written responses and will take an hour maximum.

1. How would you describe VTubing? What is your experience so far?
2. How would you describe VTubing to someone new? Did you have to explain to your audience what VTubing is?
3. What is your idea of creating a brand as a VTuber? Is keeping a brand important for you?
4. Do you have a lore and is it visible in your Live2D model? Does a lore also contribute to the brand?
5. How would you describe the effects of culture in VTubing? Does your real-life culture affect the design of your Live2D model?
6. What are the differences between utilizing a chibi Live 2D and a regular one?
7. Can you think of the downsides and benefits of having a chibi Live2D?

Thank you and that concludes today's interview. The next step in my capstone is the design process. I'll send the preview model on the "Call for Participants" so you can provide feedback while I design the chibi version of your model. The rest of our communication during the design process can be asynchronous. The final interview will happen 1-2 weeks after your streaming test.

## Appendix F

### Final In-Depth Interview Transcript and Questions

Good day, this is the last of two in-depth synchronous interviews for this research. It consists of semi-structured, open-ended questions about your utilization of chibi Live2D.

1. What did you think of the chibi model? Which features do you like the most/ least liked in the model?
2. How would you describe your usage experience of the chibi model as a nano-influencer?
3. Did you create a new persona while using the chibi model?
4. Did you receive negative feedback or comments from the audience about the chibi model?
5. Did you receive positive feedback? Did the chibi model prompt memes or fanmade creations after or during the presentation of it?
6. Did the chibi L2D create a positive, negative, or neutral impact on your brand?
7. I created a diagram illustrating my current findings of the design process in creating a chibi model. How accurate is this based on your previous experiences of using Live2D models?
8. What are your recommendations for future researchers who would like to tackle a similar topic to my capstone?

Thank you for your contributions to my capstone report. This concludes the interview.

## Appendix G

### CHECKLIST FOR FAIR USE

Please complete and retain a copy of this form in connection with each possible "fair use" of a copyrighted work for your project

Name: Marie Chessrine L. Badlon

Date: 07/05/2024

Project: PERSPECTIVES OF THE NANO-INFLUENCERS IN UTILIZING CHIBI LIVE2D MODELS:  
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VTUBING AS  
A BRANDING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENT

Institution: University of the Philippines Open University

Prepared by: Marie Chessrine L. Badlon

#### PURPOSE

##### *Favoring Fair Use*

- Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use)
- Research
- Scholarship
- Nonprofit Educational Institution
- Criticism
- Comment
- News reporting
- Transformative or Productive use (changes the work for new utility)
- Restricted access (to students or other appropriate group)
- Parody

##### *Opposing Fair Use*

- Commercial activity
- Profiting from the use
- Entertainment
- Bad-faith behavior
- Denying credit to original author

#### NATURE

##### *Favoring Fair Use*

- Published work
- Factual or nonfiction based
- Important to favored educational objectives

##### *Opposing Fair Use*

- Unpublished work
- Highly creative work (art, music, novels, films, plays)
- Fiction

#### AMOUNT

##### *Favoring Fair Use*

- Small quantity
- Portion used is not central or significant to entire work
- Amount is appropriate for favored educational purpose

##### *Opposing Fair Use*

- Large portion or whole work used
- Portion used is central to work or "heart of the work"

#### EFFECT

##### *Favoring Fair Use*

- User owns lawfully acquired or purchased copy of original work
- One or few copies made
- No significant effect on the market or potential market for copyrighted work
- No similar product marketed by the copyright holder
- Lack of licensing mechanism

##### *Opposing Fair Use*

- Could replace sale of copyrighted work
- Significantly impairs market or potential market for copyrighted work or derivative
- Reasonably available licensing mechanism for use of the copyrighted work
- Affordable permission available for using work
- Numerous copies made
- You made it accessible on Web or in other public forum
- Repeated or long-term use

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