

**THE SOCIAL NETWORK SURGE: AN INVESTIGATION ON THE CATALYSTS
OF YOUTUBE AND ITS GROWTH**

by

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Abstract

With YouTube, created in 2005, being at the forefront of social networking sites (SNSs) and Internet usage in 2021, the aim of this thesis is to understand and research the reasoning behind the evolution and progression of YouTube. This will focus on the elements that have aided its growth through an empirical study on 131 young adults. With the exponential growth of the Internet in the past decade and a half, it is fundamental for academic research to observe this growth accordingly.

Existing literature has a broad scope in addressing the growth of YouTube in society, however there is limited research establishing the reasons behind this. Through cumulative research, we can lessen the gap in knowledge of the YouTube; to do this, the focus must centre on which elements have catalysed its popularity. The structure of this thesis on YouTube will be in four themes: firstly, the technological developments in society, secondly, the content on YouTube, thirdly the content creators on YouTube and finally the YouTube users. Each theme discussed within this research brings its own discussion and analysis to the research question at hand.

Within the MA Thesis, I applied a mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative research, aiming to uncover the reasoning behind the growth of YouTube and the scope of its influence. The research will apply a questionnaire with one hundred and twenty-seven participants and four interviews. The theoretical framework throughout each chapter is to present the everyday voices and experience of the research participants and their relationship to YouTube. It is through combining this selection of research with in-depth theory of the history and the personalities within YouTube, that a comprehensive reasoning to the evolution of YouTube can be deliberated.

As the themes and findings within this research all underpin the growth of YouTube in society and the catalysis of its growth, it is vital we evaluate and explore these theme to predict where YouTube might head in the future. Coughlan (2016) reported that 96% of “13- to 18-year-olds, were signed up to social media networks” (p. 1) and it is research like this that illustrated the importance of SNSs influence on society, especially when looking into the future generation. Further research is fundamental in order to justify why society are so heavily engaged with the online SNSs such as YouTube. This research will aim to establish a more cohesive body of knowledge on the research question at hand adding to previous literature and research.

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Introduction

The existence of YouTube is dependent on its features with four compulsory intertwining components standing predominant: the technology, the creators, the content and the user. The presence of social networking sites (SNSs) rely on these four main components; the technology, to provide an environment for the information to harvest and allow the user access to the site, the creators who produce content that is alive within this environment. This allows the user to watch YouTube content and exist in this technological environment digesting the content provided by the creators. All four elements rely on each other in order for SNSs to exist. However, which is more significant, if any?

YouTube, which was created in 2005, is an American SNS that allows users to upload, view, comment, like and share video content. Bought by Google in 2005 for \$1.65 billion, the SNS made Chad Hurley and Steve Chen billionaires (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009, p. 9). The site offers a wide variety of video content from user generated content (UGC) to professional corporate content. In order for YouTube to remain a functioning monetised SNS, it remains a cohesion of user generated content and commercial advertising, branding and product promotion.

The principal question within this research is to investigate what has catalysed the growth of the SNS YouTube in the last decade. As “YouTube continues to be the largest single source of real-time entertainment traffic... which makes it the leading source of Internet traffic in the entire world” (Sandvine Intelligent Broadband Networks, 2013, p. 2), it is therefore important that academic research and studies keep investigating its growth and expansion. With YouTube being the largest source for Internet entertainment it therefore has a large presence in everyday society with access to YouTube available from almost anywhere. This access to this SNS has allowed users to rely on the information source and the people that harvest within it creating its sense of importance. Ball-Rokeach (1985) detailed how this sense of importance and the reliance on the SNS allows the site to become more influential to society. This highlights the importance to maintaining new and relevant research in this industry. This research aims to focus on specific aspects within YouTube that have aided its growth and popularity taking a close reading of the SNS.

the more important a medium is to consumers and the more heavily they rely on it, the more influential it becomes to them.

Along with the rapid growth in importance of the industry and the “pace of academic research [and] studies of media use ‘being’ invariably out of date long before they even make it to publication” (Giles, 2003, p. 148) making continuous new primary data and research is essential. This allows a continuous analysis of the industry and the ever changing relationship between the SNS, the technology, its content, the creators, and its users. This research aims to lessen this growing gap in literature by exploring the reasoning behind YouTube’s growth into becoming the leading source of Internet traffic and discuss the potential future of the SNS YouTube.

0.1 Framework of the Thesis

It was from within the literature sourced and referenced throughout this research that the categories and subcategories for this study were devised. This resulted in the main four catalysts towards the growth of YouTube being: Technological Developments, YouTube and its Content, Content Creators and YouTube Users.

Each chapter within this thesis aims to concentrate on one factor which may have affected the growth in YouTube over the last decade, in particular the use of the voices and experience of the research participants in each chapter will guide the analysis. This exploration will depict which, features of YouTube are the main catalyst for its expansion, popularity and influence in society from the perspective of my selected data.

Firstly, *Chapter One, Research Methodology and Methods*, will focus on the research instruments used within this research in order to gain rich data. The justification of these will be discussed, as well as how they have contributed the study to provide beneficial data and furthermore enable to scholastic discussion. Ethical consideration will also be evaluated to ensure an ethical approach was applied.

Chapter Two, Technological Developments, examines the technological developments within the Internet in the 21st century and YouTube itself, including how content has been able to exist on YouTube and how YouTube’s features have change over the years to allow the site to be more or less accessible to its users. The implications of the development of technological

devices and their accessibility will also be discussed, analysing how new technologies have allowed YouTube to become more accessible to its user and allowed content to become easier to consume and create.

These changes could influence and affect its users use of this SNS in different ways either allowing an increased or decreased usage. This is all depending on how well YouTube's functions, navigational systems appeal to its users and allow consumption to be user friendly. An investigation into the future of YouTube and its relationship with technologies will also be undertaken in order to get a further understanding on the projection of YouTube in the upcoming years and the effects these technologies could have on SNSs as a whole.

This theme was derived from secondary research, in particularly Crick (2016). Within this work, Crick discusses how technological developments are parallel to the growth within society and therefore technology can appeal to its users more. This will be discussed in more depth within this chapter.

Chapter Three, YouTube and its Content, will explore the content of YouTube and will investigate how popular content on YouTube has evolved over the years. The influence of the type of content consumed will also be discussed and analysed to understand how users are affected by different styles of content. The content on YouTube will also be compared to that of traditional media forms, such as television, to illuminate the similarities and dissimilarities between each media form and highlight any correlating matters.

This theme is a contributing factor within this research as initial research found that Nalty and Scott (2010) found a connection between homemade video content and users within their research. They discovered that users craved homemade video content and YouTube was able to facilitate this perfectly. Therefore, content, especially user generate content within YouTube was a significant theme to discuss within this research study.

Chapter Four, Content Creators, will discuss the development of personalities of the YouTuber themselves. The creation and evolution of online personalities on YouTube, known as YouTubers, will be investigated and compared to traditional celebrities. Their personalities and characteristics will be investigated with the application of theory alongside primary and

secondary research in order to depict whether personality traits are a contributing factor to the catalysis of YouTube's growth of consumption.

The theme of content creators was explored within this research after secondary research into YouTube and its growth was conducted. Hunter, Lobato and Richardson (2014) discussed how YouTube pushed amateur to the forefront of the site through the Web 2.0. Their research and findings linked both technology and content to content creators within YouTube and therefore this was a vital chapter and finding to discuss within this research.

Chapter Five, YouTube Users, here the focus is on the users of YouTube will be investigated to discover their relevance to the catalysis of YouTube's growth. Their role within the YouTube community will be interpreted and evaluated through the consumer's expectations. The user's relationship with the SNSs will also be investigated and their degree of interactivity will be evaluated through primary research.

It is no surprise that YouTube users were to be discussed within this research. They play a vital part within the catalyst of the site. Kim (2012) exemplified how YouTube's income is dependent on programmes that require users on the site. Therefore, without users of YouTube, the site would not be profitable and therefore would cease to exist, hence the inclusion of this theme within this research.

Finally, the *Conclusion* of this thesis will summarise the main finding within this research and how these have added academic value to the subject area at hand. Any limitations of this research will be evaluated in order to create recommendation for future academic studies.

Chapter One – Research Methodology and Methods

Introduction

In order to obtain significant and comprehensive empirical primary research data from participants, it is imperative that a suitable methodology is chosen and applied. Methodology can be defined as “a coherent set of methods and techniques which are used together, to enable the conduct of research” (Hughes and Bertrand, 2005, p. 258). The two methodologies that were used within this research are quantitative and qualitative. These research methods used in this thesis include:

- One questionnaire with fourteen questions with one hundred and twenty-seven responses (see figure 3)
- Four interviews with a minimum of thirteen questions (see figure 6, 9, 12 and 15)

Questionnaires were then created consisting of approximately fourteen questions (see figure 3), to be answered by over one hundred participants. Furthermore, depending on certain demographic characteristics found in the questionnaires, participants will be selected for four interviews (see figure 6, 9, 12 and 15) to provide more rich and in-depth qualitative data.

1.1 Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approach

The quantitative data in this study is vital to this research in order to harvest numerical data to then be converted into statistical data. Quantitative data is then used to draw statistical conclusions, gathered through analysis and interpretation. While quantitative research may lack validity, due to its incapacity to provide sufficient reasoning for its statistics, “such techniques have useful contribution to make particularly for the interpretation of media outputs, its consumption and effects” (Jensen, 2011, p. 258). This makes quantitative research an important part of the research process contributes to the discussion of YouTube consumption and its growth.

To progress from the quantitative research, qualitative research was used in order to aid reasoning for the statistical conclusions provided. Qualitative data aims to draw a more theoretical approach to the data by interpretation and evaluation. Similar to quantitative research, qualitative has its downfalls. Although qualitative research can evaluate reasoning for the research question at hand whilst also providing rich data, it has been thought that

interpretations can be altered dependant on the researcher (Berger, 2014, pp. 26-27). It is therefore essential that reflective practice takes place to ensure that the data is not affected and does not reflect the researcher's estimation or prejudgements.

To allow for successful reflectivity to take place, it is essential to have awareness in the research you are undergoing. LeCompte (2010) discusses how "selectivity cannot be eliminated, but it is important to be aware of how it affects data collection, and hence, the usefulness and credibility of research results. To develop such awareness, people collecting data should be aware of the effects of both tacit and formative theory" (p. 146). Tacit theories are used to provide predictions for things that could happen in the future based on past experiences and guide behaviours accordingly. Because of this, other areas could be overlooked when focusing on this. Similarly, formative theories also guide behaviours but are more formal and are usually found in studies and research. As these ideas are a result from research, they therefore have influence and create bias in new research as elements of this research are applied moving forward in new research. Having the knowledge of these theories and their applications on new research will allow sufficient reflectivity to take place during this research.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods is also known as a mixed method approach. The use of a mixed method approach has facilitated the expansion of the research, deepening the insights found within the data (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 246). The application of both methodologies in conjunction will "achieve more and better illuminations of a research problem than a single method applied in isolation" (Hansen and Machin, 2013, p. 6). This is because qualitative research can provide reasoning for the statistical quantitative data previously sort and its own findings and conclusions to the research question at hand. The use of a mixed method approach has will aim to provide "strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 12) and moreover increased the validity of the research conducted. Therefore, it was superlative that the combination of both data collections would be applied within this research to ultimately form comprehensive conclusions towards the research question.

The combination of questionnaires and interviews has provided substantial data for this research study. Parker and Paisley (1966) were the first researchers to combine questionnaires, interviews and daily studies (observation/fieldwork notes). They stated that it is fundamental to collect successful research data on "any behavior [is] by asking people about it, by observing

its occurrence, or by examining its artefacts (e.g., documents)” (p. 1064). These three research instruments all individually and collectively contribute in different ways in order to investigate the catalysis of YouTube and its growth.

1.2 Research Instruments - Questionnaires

The next research method undertaken was in the form of a questionnaire. A questionnaire, also known as a survey, is defined by Wiseman and Aron (1972) as:

“a method for collecting and analysing social data via highly structured and often very detailed questionnaires in order to obtain information for large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population”
(p. 37)

As this explanation details, the questionnaire aimed to successfully reach a large number of respondents, in order to gather a representable sample. These respondents, however, were a convenient sample, a “nonprobability sampling [method] in which people are sampled simply because they are ‘convenient’ sources of data for researchers” (Battaglia and Lavrakas, 2008, p. 2). This differs from random sampling as random sampling requires “everybody in the population to have an equal chance to be included” (Holt and Walker, 2009, p. 34). As this is highly unrealistic to achieve at this level, random sampling cannot be used. As convenient sampling participants are likely to meet requirements as many are available and are accessible to the research it is therefore easier to find participants willing to offer their time (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016, p. 2) this sampling technique was used within this research. An element of snowball sampling will also be applied within this research. For example, in order to reach the desired number of participants, the researcher asks participants to enlighten their peers to acknowledge the study and take part in the questionnaire, if they wish to do so (Emerson, 2015, p. 166). This allowed a higher volume of participants to be reached, furthermore gaining more representable findings.

A questionnaire was constructed of fourteen compulsory questions (see figure 6, 9, 12 and 15) seeking to obtain responses through a self-administered and unsupervised online questionnaire platform Qualtrics which was accessible for a week period. Clifford, French and Valentine (2010) stated that “a shorter questionnaire will increase the response rate. The best response

rate is achieved from questionnaires with 15 questions or less” (p. 175). Therefore, only fourteen precise questions were used in order to appeal to the participant.

The fourteen questions consisted of a combination of both closed and open-ended questions including two demographically based questions. An open-ended question allows for the participants to construct their response themselves freely whereas, a closed question requires the participant to choose from predetermined answers (Berger, 2014, p. 258). The application of both types of questions allowed for an expanded scope with open-ended questions facilitating opinions, beliefs and judgements whereas closed questions allowed for statistical evidence (Gillham, 2008, p. 5).

The questionnaire was designed in a specific way so that different questions could follow on from another dependant on the response from participants. If a participant gave a specific answer to a closed question they may then skip to another section of the questionnaire. This was done to utilise the information of key participants with the research gave and also diminish responses with no information or that participants could not answer saving their time.

The questionnaire primarily enabled statistical data collection on the understanding of how YouTube has developed over its existence and how much influence YouTube has on society. The research also offered some examples of why the users believed that YouTubers (YouTube celebrities) produce their content but also why the users watch this content on the site.

A descriptive approach is used in the questionnaire analysis to gather evidence from participants in relation to “specific events experience by individuals” (Lambert and Lambert, 2013, p. 255) and also “obtain information about demographic factors” (Berger, 2014, p. 249). Therefore, this approach will be applied when closed questions are used to gain quantitative data. On the other hand, an analytical approach “systematically seeks to explicate the social mechanisms that generate and explain... events” (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998, p. 1) was consequently applied when open-ended questions were used within the questionnaire gaining qualitative data.

A limitation for this research instrument is that “they do require a lot of time and skill to design and develop. They need to be short and simple to follow, so complex question structures are not possible” (Walliman, 2010, p. 97). It was also more complex to get the questionnaire out

to an older audience and therefore this audience had to be sourced separately which took up valuable.

1.3 Research Instruments - Interviews

To build on the statistical quantitative data gathered in the questionnaire and to introduce rich, qualitative data interviews were conducted. Interviews aim to question a “small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation” (Boyce and Neale, 2006, p. 3). As this definition specifies, a small number of four participants will contribute to this research study through interviews.

The participants who were interviewed were to be sample through purposeful sampling, whereby “the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest and then tried to locate individuals who have those characteristics” (Johnson and Christensen, 2008, p. 239). These characteristics will be taken from the data collected within the questionnaires. As the questionnaires were mostly distributed online, the largest age group of participants who completed the questionnaire will highlight the demographic that is currently more active online. This age group was then targeted due to their increased presence. Another characteristic each participant was required to hold is to be an active user of YouTube in order to provide relevant data on the industry from their knowledge through usage.

The interviews that took place in Canterbury, UK, were semi-structured consisting of ten questions, however, permitted the elaboration and expansion from the participant where necessary. The use of a semi-structured interview will “make better use of knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important” (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 21). This provided detailed qualitative data from each interview within this research study by allowing ideas, thoughts, opinions, attitudes and motivations of participants to be explored (Berger, 2014, p. 161). The use of ten structured questions allowed the researcher to direct the participant to gain the fundamental data and responses required but also allowed for new topics and other questions to be added during the interview process.

A methodological approach was applied within this research in order to ensure that no two interviews identical. Once the first of the four interviews has taken place, it was then analysed, and important topics and responses were drawn from the transcript. These topics and responses

were then applied to the initial set of ten interview questions to create a more advanced set of interview questions to gather more data from the next interview to take place. This allowed for further expansion on new ideas enlarging the scope of the study. As permission was allowed, all the interviews were recorded to facilitate this aspect and ensure detailed and correct transcriptions were made and extensive notes were also taken during the interviews.

The interviews aim to facilitate the growth of understanding and reasoning for participants commentaries allowing them to share their personal experiences whilst the researcher still maintained control over the research. New ideas and concepts that were not once thought of can flourish through from the participant giving a diverse perspective on the matter at hand. As the questionnaires were limited when discussing the user, this subject matter was explored in great depth within this part of the research. In order to provide clear findings and evidence from this, qualitative data patterns, classifications, themes, and categories will be derived from the data and found upon interview analysis.

1.4 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations have been applied throughout this research as it is crucial that “you should aim above all to cause no harm to your participants” (Holt and Walker, 2009, p. 132) during any research taking place. The importance of these ethical issues are primarily to ensure the safety of all participants just before, during and after any research taking place. The understanding and contemplation of ethical principles is now considered a key research skill in order pass an ethical review and meet your institution’s requirements (Farrimond, 2013, p. 11). It was therefore at the core of all research instruments used and under constant review during the gathering of research to ensure the safety of all participants.

To guarantee that any participants involved within the conduction of the questionnaires and interviews, each participant was given an information sheet in order to ensure individually each participant had all the information in regard to the research aims and requirements. A Participant Information and Consent Form (see figure 1 and 2) was given prior to the questionnaires and interviews to each participant for them to read and sign. This will ensure that each participant understood the research wholeheartedly, minimising any deception, and offering informed consent to the completion of the research which is about to take place. These forms also included information on who to contact in relation to any questions as well as how the information will be stored, how long it will be kept and who has access to this information.

This form also explains the rights for any participant to withdraw at any time, without neglecting to give reason. Without the document signed, the conduction of any research would not go ahead.

During the research process names will not be used, in order to provide confidentiality and anonymity to participants. Therefore, when discussing any research data within this thesis numerical figures will be used in relation to the questions and all interview candidates will go by either Research Participant One, Two, Three or Four. This is known as the data cleaning process. The research “remove identifiers to create a “clean” data set. A clean data set does not contain information that identifies respondents” (Kaiser, 2009, p. 5). This clean date set will be used within the research analysis as “confidentiality (via anonymity) allows participants the freedom to express their experiences and opinions without fear of identification [any]...Exposing the identities of research participants... fosters the possibility for more than just emotional harm” (Giordano, O'Reilly, Taylor and Dogra, 2007, p. 269). This ensures that this study remains ethical and researcher bias is minimal and avoided as much as possible during this research.

Within the research, there are no questions that ask about any sensitive or delicate topics to minimise any potential harm or upset to participants. It was decided that an age restriction of sixteen years-old and above was compulsory for all participants within any part of the research. This age restriction was chosen as “those over 16 are regarded as autonomous in most areas of life” (Masson, 2004, p. 44). This would minimise any harm caused to participants and also ensure that participants taking part in the research understood their roles and the intentions of the study.

Conclusion

An explanation of the mixed-methods used in this study was fundamental in order to correctly understand the data provided. The above information offers the strengths of the research methods used and how the mixed-method approach allows the researcher to “obtain information through different procedures to heighten the dependability and trustworthiness of the data and their interpretation” (Zohrabi, 2013. p. 254). After undertaking the research outlined previously in this chapter, any limitations or suggestions for future research will be discussed in the overall conclusion of this thesis.

Whilst this study is specific due to location, resources, time and access, “quantitative and qualitative techniques provide a tradeoff between breadth and depth and between generalizability” (Frenchling and Sharp, 1997. p.4). This offers an insight into this topic and allows a general design that can be developed upon by other scholars in future research.

Chapter Two – Technological Developments

Introduction

This chapter shall examine the significance of technological developments will be applied to the research subject at hand. To summarise, this section will be divided into eight sub-sections; History of the Internet, The Beginnings of UGC, The Birth of SNS, The Start of YouTube, Quality of Video Content, Access to YouTube, Features Within YouTube and a concise conclusion of the chapter's findings. Each sub-section will aim to discuss how these factors have facilitated the growth of YouTube. The affect that these technological changes have had on SNSs, specifically YouTube, will be explored along with the analysis of primary and secondary research data.

Technological developments act as a critical point in the growth in YouTube. Without the Internet or a device to access the Internet on, people would not be able to use any form of SNS. During the interview process of this research, Research Participant Four (RP4) states when asked about the influence of technology on YouTube that:

Technology is like a major influence. I think without the technology that we have now YouTube wouldn't be as big as it was...a really important role because without the technology YouTube literally wouldn't exist or wouldn't be as popular as it is now. (RP4, 2019)

This comment highlights how important the technological developments are on the SNS industry and the important role they play on the growth of SNSs like YouTube.

Crick (2016) reinforces this importance by stating that "YouTube's technologies parallel the historical developments of the Internet technologies" (P. xi). Crick's statement highlights that the Internet's development, a fundamental technological aspect that allows the SNS YouTube to exist, corresponds with the growth and expansion of YouTube's features within its site. Without the growth of the Internet from military use to the wider society, YouTube would not have grown in popularity as it has. It is essential to understand the stages of the Internet's growth to apply these to this study.

During the quantitative gathering of data through research questionnaires a link between technological developments and access to the Internet was discovered. When participants were asked to rate the most influential aspect on YouTube's growth, technological advancements and access to the Internet was the highest rated factors. This emphasises the connection between the developments of technology, access to the Internet and the popularity of YouTube. Crick (2016) highlights how "understanding Internet technologies, technologies associated with creating YouTube videos, older traditional media creation technologies, technologies associated with advertising on YouTube, and technologies related to managing YouTube subscribers and videos is vital and informs broader critical knowledge and understanding related to YouTube's place in our shared culture" (p. 286). It is therefore important that we discuss these areas further to gain a deeper understanding of the elements that have helped catalyse YouTube's popularity.

2.1 History of the Internet

In order to understand how technologies have affected YouTube and how the SNS has adapted and changed over the years, it is important to discuss how YouTube began to gain its significance in society. With the Internet being described by Barry (1996:121) as "the most important single development in the history of human communications since the invention of call waiting" (as cited in Winston, 1998, p. 336), it is vital that its existence and history is discussed as without it YouTube, its content, online personalities and their communities would cease to exist.

Dr Doug Gale (2007) used the phrase 'the Internet's Dark Age' to describe the lack of records kept of the Internet's initial production. This was because of its loose recordkeeping and lack of communications when the Internet was first being developed and evolving (Crick, 2016, p. 4). In 1968, Taylor and Licklider proposed that computer technology could be used as a tool, allowing computers to develop, encode and decode information and furthermore share new material. This was the first-time mass communication technology was articulated in this way (Crick, 2016, p. 5).

This ideas from Taylor and Licklider (1968) can be related to Stuart Hall's reception theory of encoding and decoding (1971). Although the producer may encode a message a certain way this does not mean the reader will decode the message in the same way (Hall, 2019, p.182). Also, the producer may create one piece of content with a certain message, each user may not

decode the same piece of content in the same way. This means that multiple different messages could be interpreted differently from the same type of content depending on the user themselves. Therefore, creators must be careful to consider how their work may be understood to maintain their popularity.

In a similar way, YouTube's content is developed by each creator or YouTuber encoding their own messages through content and uploading their video on YouTube. This content is then showcased and available for their users to decode their own meanings and reveal different interpretations. From the like and dislike buttons and the comments, it is clearly illustrated how different users decode the same YouTube content acquiring different and alternative messages.

These different messages can be seen from one of Zoe Sugg's (Zoella) most popular YouTube video '*7 Second Challenge With Miranda Sings | Zoella*' published in 2014. As of April 2021, the video has 549 thousand thumbs up and 13 thousand thumbs down. This illustrates how users have experienced the same content through the same video but have expressed different views and opinions on it. This is down to how the users decode the content that they consume.

Although it is hard to know which type of decoding will be employed by a consumer, Hall (1980) identified "three hypothetical positions". The user can either decode the content to obtain the full, partial, or contrary message the producer or YouTuber had anticipated. These are known as the dominant position, the negotiated position, and the oppositional position (Hall, 2003, p.51). Therefore, the content creator needs to be extremely careful when creating videos in relation to how different consumers may decode their content, although it is nearly impossible to elevate this completely. These different decoded messages could alter the popularity of the content creator if many consumers decode the message in a negative way giving the content creator a bad image.

In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee began researching a way to organise the Internet and redesign its structure. Arguably, this was the most significant contribution to the change in the way the Internet was used and still used today. Berners-Lee's concept was to make the Internet a "collaborative tool" (Poe, 2011, p. 214) by organising information on the Internet by allowing similar and related information to be directed to users. This has allowed the navigation of the Internet we have today (Cohen-Almagor, 2011, p. 53) by creating a shortened route and

therefore increasing the speed of accessing information. This was the creation of the foundations of the World Wide Web (WWW) we know today.

The initial technological developments of the Internet and the WWW have catalysed the growth of SNSs by allowing users to have a dramatically increased two-way communication. This has allowed the facilitation of “the visual, aural and psychological experience of YouTube and social network activity and video sharing” (Crick, 2016, p. 21).

These earlier stages of the web, known as Web 1.0, began with coders enabling the web to exist. Further on, once coders catalysed the web, designers took over in order to change the appearance and usability of its pages. It was after this that eventually the web was opened up to society and become Web 2.0. There are no specific “hard boundaries” (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 3) between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 and no significant technical change to differentiate the two, but it was the way the web would be utilised and viewed by users that saw the beginning of Web 2.0 (Brown, 2009, p. 1).

Goodchild (2007) described the Web 2.0 as a “bi-directional collaboration in which users are able to interact with and provide information to central sites, and to see that information collated and made available to others” (p. 27). Moreover, this made the web a two-way communication system. Although, at this point the two-way communication system was primarily textual, it formed the basis for most SNSs we see today, including YouTube. Without this development from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, the foundations of the Internet we use in society today would be completely different and SNSs would have ceased to exist. Web 2.0 enabled users to articulate and view each other’s profiles to allow communication with people (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211). If the web did not evolve from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 this function would not be able to exist.

The transformation from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has permitted a two-way communication system by turning the Internet from the readable into the readable and writable. This two-way communication is at the heart of SNS’ functions. This has allowed ordinary users of the Internet to not only consume content on the WWW but also add their own contributions, views and opinions becoming a creator themselves. This is done through users inputting text, pictures, sounds and videos onto the web, transferring the control of the web to the user (Brown, 2009, pp. 1-2). It is this technical infrastructure of the Web 2.0 that has facilitated this user-control

by allowing user generated content to exist via SNSs (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 262). Without this, the WWW and therefore SNSs, would only be able to distribute professional creator's content, minimising YouTube's growth and popularity. Crick (2016) highlights how "never before have so many people participated in the production of so many widely distributed, viewed, altered, and reproduced cultural products in the form of video, audio, and textual information" (p. x) and this is only possible due to the development of the Internet allowing so.

It is from the advancement of the Internet that users have been "empowered by these new technologies, occupying a space at the intersection between old and new media, are demanding the right to participate within the culture" (Jenkins, 2006, p.24). This idea of participatory culture has stemmed from the consumer realising their power and influence they have over media platforms such as SNSs. Sanders explains this this change in power from the creators to the users; "The users of products, interfaces, systems, and spaces are realizing that through networking they have an enormous amount of collective influence. They are beginning to use their influence to get what they want, when they want it and how they want it. The new rules call for new tools. People want to express themselves and to participate directly and proactively in the design development process." (p. 2) With users realising their supremacy and furthermore demanding more participatory culture within their everyday life, it comes as no surprise that SNSs like YouTube have become accustomed to their needs. It is however, important to note that without the technological developments, it is questionable as to whether this higher demand for a participatory culture would exist.

2.2 The Beginnings of User-Generated Content

The contribution of a user on the Internet is known as User Generated Content (UGC). UGC is defined as "content [that] comes from regular people who voluntarily contribute data, information, or media that then appears before others in a useful or entertaining way" (Krumm, Davies and Narayanaswami, 2008, p. 10). The first instance of UGC on the internet was evident in online blogs. Whilst television had previously featured members of the public within their content, those featured had little to no control on what was aired and how they were positioned. In contrast to this, UGC online gave creators full control, making them able to be the producers, directors, editors and stars of their own content as well as increasing democratic culture.

In 1997, we saw the beginning of UGC through the form of web blogging, also known as ‘*weblogging*’. Weblogging was the first form of SNS, primarily only allowing text (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 263). Jorn Barger was the first to use the terminology weblog when naming his blog ‘*The Robot Wisdom Weblog*’ in 1995. Most weblogs at the time consisted of links to other websites or logs of other interesting weblogs, whilst also adding the creator’s own commentary. LiveJournal, a weblogging website, facilitated weblogging and began as a one-directional connection between blogger and user (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 215). Online blogs were built around the idea of continuously updated blog entries. LiveJournal was the “precursor to the live updates” (Chapman, 2009, p. 1) that we see in today’s SNSs.

The majority of weblogs were hand-coded by the creator, until the late 1999s when software was designed to automate weblog publication (Blood, 2004, p. 54), one of the sites being Blogger. The appeal of Blogger at the time was that the software allowed webloggers their own personal URL, bringing users directly to their content rather than a remote server. This changed the weblog culture and personal URLs became a widely used tool (Blood, 2004, p. 54) which many SNSs, especially YouTube, still use today. On YouTube, each channel has its own URL to bring users straight to their own personalised content page making information more accessible to its users.

With the growth of UGC on SNSs “the result is a participatory culture which increasingly demands room for ordinary citizens to wield media technologies” (van Dijck, 2009, p. 42). With more users accessing these sites and the demand increasing, more content is therefore produced in order to meet this demand. With technological advances both inside the SNSs and technological items themselves, a constant wave of new content is being produced. With amateur producer gaining easier access to these sites and able to upload UGC easier, more content is subsequently produced. Cha et al. (2007) highlights this increase in content by comparing IMDb with YouTube stating, “YouTube enjoys 65,000 daily new uploads – which means that it only takes 15 days in YouTube to produce the same number of videos as all IMDb movies” (p. 2).

During the primary research of a questionnaire, question 8.B asked participants ‘*Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?*’. Responses included the following: “They are normal people”, “Started as normal people so they are truthful”, “Most of them started as normal people so it’s relatable”, “They may seem more relatable to people as more

often than not they are just ‘normal’ people” and “They are relatable (mostly), so the audience feels they are on the same level.” These responses highlight how participatory culture through UGC on SNSs like YouTube give the content validity in society.

2.3 The Birth of Social Networking Sites

Along with the weblogs, in 1997, the first recognisable SNS was produced, Six Degrees. The creation and adaptations of SNSs has facilitated the evolution of YouTube into what it has become today by fuelling “deep emotional desire and connected all of us through geography, time and space” (Crick, 2016, p. 27). The foundations and history of these sites are significant in order to establish the technological development that has occurred in order to make YouTube as popular as it is today.

SNSs primarily consist of creating an online profile and connecting with other users to enable two-way communication. SNSs were defined by Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, (2007) as a:

“web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (p. 211)”

With many SNSs emerging “from 1997 to 2001, a number of community tools began supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated Friends” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 214). This period of time was significantly important in relation to ‘The MTV Generation’, a generation thought to be heavily influenced by media content, in particular MTV (Chapin, 2005, p. 454).

Patricia Lange (2014, p. 189) stated that SNSs “...allow participants to construct a public or semi-public profile within the system and that formally articulate their relationship to other users in a way that is visible to anyone who can access their profile.” Boyd (2008) claimed that because users enjoyed “visualising their social world through a collection of networked profiles” (p. 122) this caused a rise in SNSs as SNSs were facilitating the wants of their users and audience.

SNSs involved creating profiles for different purposes such as: business, dating or communication in order to focus their sites to niche communities to increase popularity with unique concepts. SNSs all have key features that are the similar, however it is their variations in structure, visibility and access design that differentiates themselves from one another (Boyd, 2008, pp. 210 - 213). With no SNS solely focusing on video content alone, and a new increased competition from more visual SNSs, it was inevitable that a video only SNS, known now as YouTube, was to be created. YouTube “helped to empower the masses” (Crick, 2016, p. 67) by “allow people to participate across line of race, gender and socioeconomically status to connect along share interests” (Crick, 2016, p. 64) more visually than any other SNS available at the time.

Whilst YouTube may enable democratic discussion due to its low-level censorship, its increase in popularity and density of users may not allow all opinions to be heard on an equal level. Shilling (2002) capitalises on this stating that “these forms soon become distanced from the individualities of their participants and no longer provide them with a means of expressing their individuality” (p. 22). Although this brings into question the freedom of speak to YouTube’s users, it is the factors influencing YouTube’s growth that are the focus of this study.

It is also key to note that YouTube has its own algorithms to which it promotes certain content to its users. Noble (2018) explains how “On the Internet and in our everyday uses of technology, discrimination is also embedded in computer code and, increasingly in artificial intelligence technologies that we are reliant on, by choice or not” (p. 1). These algorithms within YouTube influence and make decisions for its users and the content they consumer daily basis. This is something that users and content creators have no control over.

2.4 The Start of YouTube

It was in 2005 that the major video hosting SNS YouTube.com was released. The site allowed users to upload 10-minute-long videos, share them or embed them all for free. YouTube differentiated itself from other SNSs by allowing users to create a channel, YouTube’s version of a profile, and upload video content only. Over ten years later, “video sharing [still] remains the core activity of YouTube” (Crick, 2016, p. 27) along with other features that have been acquired along the years.

By the end of 2006, just over a year after YouTube was released to the public, YouTube was bought by Google creating “a partnership between the world’s largest search engine and the fastest-growing user-generated content (UGC) site in the world” (Crick, 2016, p. xvii). This further cemented YouTube and Google’s dominance in the online world (Gillespie, 2010, p. 347). Google’s purchase of YouTube “ensure[d] that YouTube was going to be around for a long time” (Gannes, 2009. p. 148) giving YouTube the longevity to make investments and grow as a platform. Without this relationship, YouTube may not have flourished as much as it has with investments and associations from Google. Crick (2016) states that due to this technological relationship with Google, “YouTube is the most culturally influential SNS” (p. 63) and without it, YouTube may not have become “the world’s largest UGC VoD [video on demand] system” (Cha et al., 2007, p. 1). The partnership of two major technologically developed companies, both which rely on the Internet and its Web 2.0 functions, could have been a fundamental motivation for the catalysis of YouTube’s growth.

Furthermore, Google also owned YouTube’s competitor Google Video during the beginning of its existence (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009, p. 10). However, once YouTube was purchased by Google, funding and advertising was put into YouTube rather than Google Video. By 2009, Google ceased uploads onto Google Video and in late April 2011, finally shut down its video holding service, advising their users to transfer to YouTube. With the number-one search engine diverting its users to video content on YouTube and the closure of YouTube’s competitor, YouTube increased in popularity among users. The transfer of this traffic also helped YouTube to improve their search engine optimisation (SEO).

2.5 Quality of Video Content

In order for YouTube to grow it “relies heavily on Internet-based technologies to function, expand, and provide a memorable and engaging YouTuber experience” (Crick, 2009, p. 27). Without continuously updating and changing YouTube would become dated in comparison to its competitors who have employed new technological developments.

When conducting primary research with participants, during an interview with Research Participant 2 (RP2) they highlighted this importance stating that they:

I can almost always rely on his content because it's always high quality and really really well edited. (RP2, 2019)

They carried on from this to say:

If I'm watching a video that's kind of low quality then I'm not gunna quite enjoy as much as I would. (RP2, 2019)

This emphasises that users of YouTube enjoy content that is of higher visual quality and therefore rely on the SNS to be able to support this content otherwise enjoyment rate could decrease and in turn content on the site would be consumed less. Without the technical infrastructure of YouTube, able to harvest content of this high quality, the creator would not be able to produce this in order to satisfy its users and potentially could look to distribute their content on another SNS.

It was clear that “investments in this area of technology deployments [were] likely to increase substantially, as new programming options and content choices [became] available to an increasing number of consumers all over the world” (Ahmad and Begen, 2009, p. 68). The evolution of technical developments in areas, such as the broadband communication network, video services, SNSs like YouTube, were expected to significantly invest in these technical areas in order to keep up (Luan, Cai and Xuemin, 2010, p. 64). Research Participant Four highlighted the importance of one of these technological advancements in relation to Internet speed:

If the Internet was really slow, then I'd get fed up of watching videos because I'd just be waiting for it to buffer. So, I mean, I remember when I was younger, we'd sit down and wait for it all to load and then it would still a buffer you just end up getting annoyed and just clicking off. (RP4, 2019)

Research Participant Four underlines how technological advancements were not as advanced as they are now and how it affected their consumption as they would get frustrated with waiting for the video content to load. It was therefore important for SNSs, especially YouTube, that these technological advancements developed and allowed the sites to keep up to date allowing users to access the SNS with these new technologies.

With YouTube's partnership with Google and technological developments occurring with "the recent explosive growth in the demand for video-based social networking applications... as well as the availability of ever more high-definition TV" (Ahmad and Begen, 2009, p. 68) YouTube slowly began to increase its video quality. In late 2005, when YouTube first began, video quality was only at 320-pixels. Although other features were added and adjusted to YouTube, such as personalised profiles in February 2006, video quality did not modify until March 2008 to become 480-pixel quality. It was the demand for "more and better quality video content [from] consumers" (Ahmad and Begen, 2009, p. 68) that was the driving force behind this change. Therefore, in order for YouTube to keep increasing its traffic to its site, it needed to keep up with this demand if it was to continue its success.

Development sped up after this, with the next adaptation to video quality in July 2009 from 480-pixels to 720-pixels. A few months later, this expanded to 1080-pixels in November 2009. Increases in quality continue to occur within YouTube with quality of video currently (2020) standing at its highest point of 1440-pixels with high definition (HD). It was undoubtable that YouTube will maintain and continue to increase the quality of video, in line with technological developments in order to maintain its users.

Research Participant Two goes into great detail of these technological developments of YouTube and how these have affected the content they watch:

YouTube when it first came out in 2006 was such a small platform and it can only encode videos is such a small rate. So, you only had videos reaching like 2..240P which is very like small resolution scale to what they used to now. Technology advances have just grown so rapid you can upload a video in like the space of 10 minutes rather than like a day or two days with YouTube from... from when it first started. It's such a different platform as well in the past five years is still definitely changed. It didn't even reach 1080P till like two years ago or three years ago and that's such a big thing. So, I guess the technology advancements have really... really helped YouTube to you know push their boundaries on what they can actually upload and how fast videos can upscale themselves. I mean, you can get videos on YouTube that reach out to 4K which is absolutely insane. You don't really get that in normal televised, you know, TV productions and you can just get that with some random YouTuber that

you've never met. I just think that's absolutely brilliant that they've kind of developed this platform to enable that. (RP2, 2019)

Research Participant Two emphasises many important technological developments that have aided YouTube's growth since its launch. Firstly, the basic coding that only allowed slow uploads onto YouTube when the site first launched which limited the amount of content that could reach its users. This also only allowed small resolution and low quality which this research participant later states, when it improved a few years later, was "such a big thing" (RP2, 2019). Crick (2016) addresses this explaining how YouTube now has more "than a billion uploads per second...this significantly speeds YouTube's cultural influence and impact" (p. XII) and furthermore later discussed how "YouTube is an exemplar user-driven website that has grown internationally, largely due to the speed at which information can be duplicated and transmitted across the platform" (Crick, 2016, p. 29). This growth would have only been possible with the technological developments of the Internet and the speed in which content can be distributed along this network.

Research Participant Two continues to express how they believe these advancements have helped YouTube to push the boundaries of entertainment comparing it to that of traditional content found on devices such as television:

I mean, you can get videos on YouTube that reach out to 4K which is absolutely insane. You don't really get that in normal televised, you know, TV productions and you can just get that with some random YouTuber that you've never met. I just think that's absolutely brilliant that they've kind of developed this platform to enable that. (RP2, 2019)

Carley (2003) highlights this by expressing how the developments within the Internet has challenged the structure for traditional media entertainment forms such as the television (Crick, 2016, p. 6). YouTube allowed "in-depth and insightful commentary and analysis perceived to be absent from other media and are not filtered or censored by traditional media gatekeepers" (Tremayne, 2012, p. 141). This enable content creator's greater freedom of speech and democratised YouTube. Jenkins (2006) discusses the impact that this could have on the traditional media industry as "each time they move a viewer from television to the Internet, say, there is a risk that the consumer may not return" (p. 19). Once a new form of media is

introduced it is highly unlikely that a new generation would see the need to revisit traditional media forms due to their integration into the digital media.

2.6 Access to YouTube

It was not only the quality of video that improved on YouTube over time, but also the ability to acquire YouTube's content no matter where the users is located, assuring they having a steady Internet connection on a smart device such as a laptop or smartphone. YouTube announced in January 2009 that "in an effort to emulate a traditional TV experience using a game console, users/viewers are now able to watch YouTube videos on any TV screen" (Snickars and Vonderau, 2009, p. 15). This shift in the way users could consume YouTube challenged the structure of traditional media entertainments forms.

This integration of YouTube's features into television broadcasting "simultaneously reflect and construct the emergent culture of connectivity" (Dijck, 2013, p. 111). With the increase demand from society to connect with one another and the growth in the entertainments industry the conjunction of different forms of media features created a shift in consumer habits. Furthermore, the transition of different media platforms obtaining characteristics from other platforms is known as technological convergence. Rosenberg (1976) defined technological convergence as "the process by which different industries come to share similar technological bases" (p. 16). This is reflected when users transition from a traditional media form of television to YouTube. The visual aspect of YouTube allows the transition from television to YouTube lessen the learning gap for the consumer making it easier to use.

This transition allowed users easier access to YouTube whilst also allowing its users to not only project YouTube content onto bigger screens but made YouTube become a more social experience. Users could now consume YouTube, not only on their personal computers, but also on a larger television screen inviting other users to enjoy the content on the SNS too.

Within the primary research conducted during the interview stage, Research Participant Three maintained that they watched YouTube in their living room with their housemates (RP3, 2019). This underlines a social experience within YouTube, imitation the use of technological convergence by using a traditional form of entertainment, a television, to use the Internet and distribute video content allowing a social group to consume YouTube. Buf and Ștefăniță (2020) detailed how users expressed "the desire to be involved in a fun activity but also to the need to

spend time with close friends and family” (p. 77). This type of consumption has allowed for larger groups of people to enjoy different types of content, sharing their personal preferences with each other and therefore creators can reach a larger audience increasing YouTube’s growth. This will be discussed in greater details in later chapters of this thesis. This accessibility of YouTube onto larger screens would not be possible without the technological developments within YouTube but also that of entertainment devices such as televisions.

During Research Participant Four’s interview, they were questioned as to where and on what devices they consume YouTube the most. They went on to say:

I mainly watched YouTube on my smart TV through sky in my bedroom as it has a big screen so it’s better to watch. I don't really like to watch it on my phone cause the screen is really small and I can't really get into the content as well.
(RP4, 2019)

They followed on to stated that the larger screen made content easier to view and also harvested a better environment to consume YouTube content (RP4, 2019). This was an interesting unearthing as although the participant was using a traditional media form (a television), they were exploiting its technological features to consume YouTube’s content. This was done via the application within Sky rather than utilising Sky for all its television content, its main function.

Crick (2016) highlighted this change, stating that with “the audience increase[ing] every day on the Internet while the audience grows smaller for broadcast television” (p. 7) it can be seen that this convergence can “be considered a superior option to the conventional television” (Borés, Saurina and Torres, 2003, p. 5). With YouTube providing access to hundreds of thousands of free videos at any time or place with minimal adverts or interruptions in comparison to television, and even membership features to completely eradicate adverts altogether (YouTube Red), it is not surprising that users are heading to this SNS over the traditional media for of television.

During an interview with Research Participant One (RP1), they discussed that they believe the popularity of YouTube has derived from:

I think it's definitely like the fact that we can get YouTube from anywhere.
(RP1, 2019)

Following on from this they continued to state:

I'm always watching my actual physical TV, so the fact that I could watch
YouTube through my TV meant that I watched a lot more of it. (RP1, 2019)

This emphasises that the access of YouTube through different technologies, primarily television, has increased the consumption of YouTube content. However, with the creation of YouTube's first mobile application in September 2012, the presentation of YouTube into an application, available via a mobile phone device, has allowed users more access to the site virtually anywhere with an Internet connection.

This use of technological convergence was also found within the data obtained via the questionnaires. Among the 117 participants that took part in the full questionnaire, 97.4% (114/117) participants identified that they used another technology to watch YouTube on other than the traditional method of a computer or laptop (see figure 4C). This furthermore emphasises how the convergence of technologies has affected and moreover increased the consumption of the SNS YouTube leading to increased popularity and significance in society.

Following on from this, within the questionnaire, research participants also stated over twelve different technologies that they used to consume content on YouTube. These were: mobile phones, televisions, laptops, computers, tablets, PlayStation, Amazon Firestick, Sky, Apple TV, Google Chrome Cast, Xbox, Kindle and an interactive whiteboard. The main source being mobile phones. With most smart mobile phones allowing continuous access to the Internet providing you either have Wi-Fi or mobile data, and therefore continuous access to SNSs like YouTube, the consumption of its content is expected to increase.

Within the quantitative research gathered through questionnaire distribution, of the 117 participants that stated they watched YouTube, 90.6% (106/117) of participants identified they watch YouTube via a mobile device, many specifying iPhones in particular. Research Participant Three also stated during their interview that they consumed YouTube mainly on their phone, especially at night in bed (RP3, 2019). This additionally highlights how the access

of YouTube on mobile phones has allowed more users to consume higher volumes of YouTube content and enables a relax environment for viewing.

2.7 Features Within YouTube

Since its creation in 2005, YouTube has enabled its users to do more and more within the site. Bers (2011) stated that YouTube's "unique technical and social features support the formation of a participatory culture among the members of its community" (p. 67). Therefore SNSs, like YouTube, are continuously changing and adapting their features in order to suit their user's expectations and needs, discussed later in Chapter Five, whilst also revealing their competitors. The continuous change and adaptation allowed not only the creator to bring more content to its audience but also permit the user to do more with this content be this commenting, sharing or favouriting.

Dijck (2013) summarises Feenberg (2009) research explaining this in more detail stating that "social media platforms, rather than being finished products, are dynamic objects that are tweaked in response to their users' needs and their owners' objectives, but also in reaction to competing platforms and the larger technological and economical infrastructure" (p. 7). This is illustrated by the changes in YouTube's features over the years since its creation in 2005 and correlated with its growth in popularity.

During late 2005, as YouTube was released to the public, users saw many changes within this SNS as its features began to evolve. These changes ranged from: top videos page (presently known as the home page), subscriptions, playlists, full screen view and star rating system, and were all features that YouTube had adopted by the end of 2005. Some of the features are still prevalent in YouTube today, although some have been adapted into something similar, one of these being the YouTube thumbs up, previously known as the star rating system. This now simplified feature enables the user to provide their feedback to the creator on the content without having to decide on what rating to provide. Furthermore, YouTube are still providing the user with the option to give feedback but limiting their choices allowing the user to make a quick and clear decision increase their interactivity with the SNS.

Many features were added in the first two years of YouTube and in 2006 saw the emersion of personalised profiles, mobile phone uploading, viewing history and video responses. Throughout the years YouTube has adapted and transformed its interface in order to make the

SNS more user friendly for its user to help them watch content efficiently. These advancements have been implemented on YouTube as the technology has evolved allowing these to exist.

The features still prevalent in YouTube today, help users access the content they want in a more efficient way. Research Participant One and Two both stated during their interviews that they use many features within YouTube on a regular basis. Both stated they use their own personal home page, provided that they are signed into their accounts, in order to access their recommendations and subscriptions. Research Participant One began by saying they go to:

I go to like my home page first where it's got the recommended which is normally the new videos that I'm subscribe (RP1, 2019)

They followed onto say that a newer feature of the SNS YouTube, push notifications, helps them consume content from specific creators by having:

I have the notification set on so that when they upload I get like a notification.
(RP1, 2019)

Research Participant Two similarly informed the researcher that:

The home page and suggestion that I use most. (RP2, 2019)

These features have facilitated the increased consumption of YouTube as users can easily access the content they require in one place and can enable push notifications to their devices when new content has been uploaded. This notification entices the user to watch the new content and increases the consumption and growth of the SNS.

In all four interviews, each research participant expressed the features that are enabled on YouTube which allow them to choose the content they consume. However, F Dijck (2013, p. 113) explains that YouTube's technical infrastructure is structured in a way to perceive this;

“YouTube's interface design and its underlying algorithms select and filter content, guiding user in finding and watching certain videos out of the millions of uploads, for instance through buttons for “most popular” videos.” Control is

maintained by an “information management system that steers user navigation and selects content to promote [making]... users feel they have control over which content to watch, their choices are heavily directed by referral systems” (p. 113)

Furthermore, this highlights how although YouTube users may feel they have a large choice of their own personalised content in front of them, it is actually YouTube’s technological structure that has strategically placed it there. Research Participant Two mentioned this briefly during their interview stating:

I am subscribed to the YouTubers that I watch it's just sometimes the content doesn't reach out in my subscriptions. (RP2, 2019)

This reinforces the argument that the content that reaches its users is due to the technological infrastructure of YouTube exhibiting more control over users. This control that YouTube has on its user’s consumption habits allowed selected YouTube content or personalities to reach a wider audience. It is likely that YouTube will push out content to its users that they feel appeal to a larger audience and will furthermore increase the popularity of the SNS.

The penultimate research question within the questionnaires, asked participants to rank, in the order from the most influential to least, where they believe the rise in YouTube’s popularity has come from (see figure 4N). This question had six options for participants to rank: Technological Developments, Personalities on YouTube, Content on YouTube, Accessibility to the Internet, Culture and Environment and finally, Entertainment and Pleasure. The results of this question were as follows from most influential to least; firstly was ‘Accessibility to the Internet’, then came ‘Technological Developments’, joint third was ‘Content on YouTube’ and ‘Entertainment and Pleasure’, fifth came ‘Personalities on YouTube’ and finally ‘Culture and Environment’. From these results, it is evident that the accessibility to the Internet and technological developments were the two most influential aspect according to participants within this research, with both options having been ranked first in every age group of participants. This evidence furthermore highlights how participants within this research deemed both of the technological choices within this research as the biggest influence for the rise in YouTube’s popularity.

Finally, during their interview Research Participant Four states:

I think like technology and access to the Internet is such a big role in in the YouTube industry because literally without it wouldn't exist. If like, if people weren't interest in and like the culture wasn't like such around like watching YouTube videos or DIY video on YouTube, it wouldn't be as popular, but it would still be it would still be able to exist. (RP4, 2019)

This participant highlights that although there is a demand for YouTube content, that this demand relies heavily on the technology being able to support the content and distribute it to society.

Conclusion

From the primary and secondary research conducted, discussed, and analysed within this chapter, it is evident that technological developments have an extremely significant role within the catalysis of YouTube's popularity.

The transformation from old technologies such as television and radio, to new media forms such as the Internet and SNSs have facilitated the participatory culture that society craves. These new media forms have allowed for UGC to flourish by meeting the needs of society through technological developments.

The birth of SNSs was only possibly with the grown of technology and its developments over time. Technology has now been able to grow parallel with its users and with this continuously growing and developing it is difficult to confidently understand where SNSs like YouTube will be in the upcoming years. On the other hand, it is very clear to see the impact that technology has had on the growth of YouTube. The aspects discussed within this chapter: History of the Internet, The Beginnings of UGC, The Birth of SNS, The Start of YouTube, Quality of Video Content, Access to YouTube, Features Within YouTube have contributed to the catalysis of YouTube in today's society.

Chapter Three – YouTube and its Content

Introduction

In this chapter, the focus will be on how the content on YouTube has affected the growth of the SNS. The chapter will start with the exploration of the analysis of content from the start of YouTube in 2005 to the present day following on to also discuss the importance of video content uploaded and consumed on YouTube. This will be dissected into four sub-sections established from primary and secondary research: *Beginnings of Content on YouTube*, *Why YouTube Content*, *Content Diversity*, *Advertisement Placements Within YouTube* and finally a concise conclusion. Primary research, particularly that of qualitative data found in the interview process, will be discussed, and analysed in detail to explore how users view content within this SNS.

Although as discussed in the previous chapter, the importance of technological advancements and the quality of view this can provide, one research participants within this study believed that content still holds a very important place in the growth of YouTube. Research Participant Three stated that:

you do a video on a really bad quality camera or video but if it's like the content is like enticing and like... like you can sit and watch it without getting bored even if it's bad quality. It's still a decent video. (RP3, 2019)

Nalty and Scott (2010) briefly discuss this in their work, highlighting that “the active viewers of YouTube want to connect personally with a video creator and poorly edited moments of life intrigue them” (p. 57). This reinforces the opinion of Research Participant Three and the significance of the content over the quality and technology used in videos and therefore the importance of the content uploaded onto YouTube will be discussed further in the chapter.

3.1 Beginnings of Content on YouTube

Content on the Internet and SNSs did not originate as video format. Firstly, as previously mentioned, in 1997, the beginning of SNS industry was known as, ‘*weblogging*’ whereby creators would add commentary with links to other sites purely in text-based formatting. As SNSs progressed throughout the years and Web 2.0 facilitated the existence of a two-

directional connection, many users transitioned from weblogging to video blogging, also known as vlogging, on a site that could facilitate this, YouTube.

The beginning of content uploaded by many creators that had regularly uploaded content onto a blog previously. Zoe Sugg, who currently has 11.3 million subscribers to her YouTube channel (Zoella), is now considered one of the “most successful British vloggers in terms of subscribers on YouTube” (Dredge, 2016, p. 1). Zoe Sugg began her journey as a SNS content creator through uploading content onto a blog, <https://zoella.co.uk> and transitioned to YouTube due to the demand from her readers. Chapman (2005) explains how “online publishing fundamentally changed the nature of information storage, retrieval and dissemination offering the possibility of a more dynamic relationship between publisher and reader and blurring of traditional distinction between them” (pp. 249-50). Brady (2005) explains how this form of publishing allowed nearly anyone with access to the Internet to be able to create content online much easier and also be consumed regardless of the creator’s knowledge or skills:

However, the decision to publish was at the discretion of an editor and it largely depended on literacy skills, social class and luck whether your contribution was selected from the thousands of others sent to the newspaper or magazine. With the advent of the internet, publishing ‘one-to-many’ became infinitely easier. Anyone with a computer and internet connection could publish their own material allowing anyone else with the necessary equipment to read it. (p. 6)

Zoe Sugg was one of these individuals with access to a computer and the Internet and therefore decide to publish her own content on her personalised blog. A year of continuously posting text and image content on her blog, she progressed to video format through YouTube where her channel grew exponentially. Research Participant Three briefly spoke of the transition between blogging and YouTube when asked about where they believed the rise in YouTube popularity has come from:

they started off like blogging, writing about it and then they got into the videos and then they've got partnership with companies and the company has promoted them. Therefore, they got a wider audience and that's how it has like grown. (RP3, 2019)

When asked to provide a reason for this, Research Participant Three followed on to say:

They talk about it all the time on their videos like... erm Zoella and people.
(RP3, 2019)

On further investigation on Zoe Sugg's blog, her 'About Me' section clearly highlight how she began her content on a blog and "has expanded to YouTube with weekly videos and daily ramblings on two channels" (Sugg, 2019). This furthermore illustrates how YouTube has allowed content creators to their scope of content from just textual and images to video content.

3.2 Why YouTube Content?

The popularity of content presented and consumed on YouTube is an element of the SNS that has evolved over the years with "videos go[ing] through not one, but multiple stages of popularity increase or decrease over many months" (Yu, Xie and Sanner, 2015, p. 533). During an interview with Research Participant Three they were questioned as to whether their YouTube content preferences have change since watching YouTube. Research Participant Three stated that:

they've definitely changed, yeah, I definitely didn't watch lifestyle a lot when I was younger and now, as I've grown up, it's sort of interested me more. (RP3, 2019)

With the application of the Uses and Gratification theory (Katz, Haas and Gurevitch 1973), which is defined as individuals that seek out specific media content in which satisfies their needs in order to feel gratification (Whiting and Williams, 2013, pp. 750 - 751); users of YouTube seek content that fulfils their personal gratification criteria. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, User.

Research Participant One follows on with a similar idea to that of Research Participant Three informing the researcher that:

I'm not rich and I don't like... I don't really want to see videos about them like shopping in Gucci and stuff like that because I can't shop at Gucci, like it's not relatable whereas I'd rather watch someone like talk about how they bought

loads of stuff at IKEA because I can then go to IKEA and buy them things.
(RP1, 2019)

This statement from Research Participant One highlights the importance of content being relatable to the user in order for it to be enjoyable to be consumed more. Research Participant One also emphasises the idea of relatable content when discussing why they watch a certain YouTuber:

It's like a really big thing for her because she is like my age so her moving out the first time. I have very similar styled to her, so I like obsessive with that series. (RP1, 2019)

The idea of watching content that is relatable allows the user to connect with what they are watching. Without content that the user finds relatable they are less likely to consume.

Opposingly, Research Participant Four goes into more detail in regard to the content that they watch when asked about how important relatable content is to them. They discussed how not all content necessarily needs to be relatable:

like I was saying earlier like... I like to watch like things about stationary or something because I go to university and I need stationary but then who I watched the most is a family of vloggers and I don't have a family. I mean they have four kids six dogs. I don't have four kids and six dogs but they're still my favourite people to watch I suppose it's... I suppose it's more like, it doesn't reflect my lifestyle but that's maybe what I maybe aspire my lifestyle to be like that because they have this sort of glamorized life and they have a big house, what looks like a perfect family and everything, there is nothing wrong with any of them. So I suppose sometimes it does reflect what I'm interested in into my lifestyle, but then I don't think that's is a necessarily necessary for me to enjoy the content. (RP4, 2019)

This passage from the interview with Research Participant Four emphasises how some content they watch is relatable however not essential. They do also bring up a relevant point regarding aspiring their lifestyle to be the YouTuber whose content they consume.

With user of SNSs like Research Participant Four aspiring to the lifestyles of content creators, YouTubers therefore hold a large influence on their user. Fraser and Brown (2002) discussed this when arguing the difference between hero and celebrity highlighting that “people develop psychological bonds with both groups and seek to emulate their lives” (p. 185). With the user seeking to imitate the lives of these YouTubers, consumption is likely to increase for the user to gather more information on how they can adopt this lifestyle they seek. Research Participant Four highlights how they have been watching a YouTuber whose lifestyle they aspire to be for eight years:

the eight years they have uploaded them, I don't think I've ever found a vlog that is dull and boring. It's just, just their life. (RP4, 2019)

This draws upon consumer culture, which is questioned by Miles (1998) when he discusses the validity of individual freedom versus constructed consumption patterns; “do we as consumers design our own lifestyles or are those lifestyles designed for us?” (p. 36). This reinforces the idea that this connection between the YouTuber and user increases the consumption and therefore popularity of YouTube.

During the first interview Research Participant One stated that they found YouTube was:

definitely my main source of entertainment (RP1, 2019)

and continue later in the interview to express that:

my choices of what I watch on YouTube is definitely affected by what entertains me. (RP1, 2019)

From this interview it is also evident that users consume YouTube for an entertainment purposes. With Sandvine Intelligent Broadband Networks (2013) discovering that “YouTube continues to be the largest single source of real-time entertainment traffic... which makes it the leading source of Internet traffic in the entire world” (p. 2); the idea of what YouTube content users find entertaining and makes YouTube content enjoyable was brought into the next three

interviews. This was investigated to analysis and understand roughly what users of this SNS look for in YouTube content.

During the following interviews participants discussed several factors that contribute to ensuring content is enjoyable and consumable.

I feel like it's more... more like a relaxation for me just to sit back and just it's like watching a movie. As weird as it sounds you just sit back, watch someone you know rant on for like 10 minutes about something random or if it's something you're interested in then they'll just rant on 10 minutes about that. It's just kind of relaxing in a way as well and it's kind of like... it's kind of like a mood, to make your mood a lot more chill, if that's the right word. (RP2, 2019)

If they're like funny and their content like grabs you. So, like if I find and watch a video and I'm not interested in the first minute or two I'm just like yeah no, not watching it, move on. But if it's funny and I am interested then I will continue watching it. (RP3, 2019)

I think I don't like anything out the ordinary. I like it to be like content like I expect to see so. Like the Sacconejolys, the family vlogger, I expect to see like a daily... a daily vlog or something of that sort. If they suddenly do something completely different, I wouldn't really enjoy that cause it's not what I expected to see. I think there needs to be like some upbeat, kind of feel to the video, I'm not going to sit there it's like a monotone nothing, just like boring. Yeah I think it's going to be the type of content that I'm interested in for me to enjoy it. (RP4, 2019)

During their interviews, the research participants expressed all different reasons from relaxation to humour to explain what they believe makes YouTube content enjoyable. It is clear to understand that there are multiple factors to what makes YouTube content entertaining and through my own self analysis of the content that I myself consume, may not be entertaining or fulfilling to the next user. This could be dependent on anything from who you are with or previous experience with other similar content which was also expressed by Research Participant One. When asked does other content that you previously watched on YouTube affect how you see another person's content, the participant answered:

Yes definitely (RP1, 2019)

Research Participant One previously explained how the content previous uploaded by other creators had affected her viewing:

It's really boring and I don't really like it anyway. But yeah, I think even because it's someone I like to watch doesn't make it interesting. ... I saw Safiya Nygaard, one of my favourites again, just literally yesterday posted a 'I try ASMR video' and I haven't watched. Whereas normally I would literally watch anything she posted, I would watch it in like within ten minutes cause I get a notification.
(RP1, 2019)

However, amidst the reasons for finding YouTube content entertaining, 75% of participants during their interview expressed a very clear reason for returning to YouTube which was series or repeat content.

Series are a common element used within YouTube by many creators. This content emulates more traditional forms of media and the episodic nature of television. The content style and narrative remain similar and each episode follows on from the other creating a sense of familiarity with the content for the user. This can also build anticipation for the continuation of the content being produce as the user has to wait for the next instalment.

During the questionnaire research process, question six asked participants if they watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber (see figure 4F). Results showed that 66.67% of participants said yes and then when asked to discuss why they watched the same YouTuber; their content specifically was the highest rated reason with 57.70% and the runner up reason only rating at 19.23%. This furthermore emphasises that users of YouTube often consume similar content by revisiting a specific individual's channel and consuming all their content. This would aid the catalysation of YouTube as the SNS facilitates users being able to re-watch uploaded content. With increased views and time spent on the site, the SNS would have increased consumption.

Before the interview, each participant was also asked to fill out the questionnaire used previously in the research. When asked why they watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber Research Participant Three stated that:

YouTubers often make series of videos therefore multiple videos to watch.
(RP3, 2019)

and Research Participant Four answered the same question during their questionnaire, informing the researcher that they:

enjoy the content or it's part of a series, so I continue watching. (RP4, 2019)

Both participants highlighted that the content being part of a series reinforced them to watch and consume more content. As a result, this type of content helps to increase YouTube's popularity as more content is being consumed by its users.

Research Participant One also discussed the idea of series within their interview. They elaborated that a certain YouTuber:

she does like different series, but you don't know when they're going to be posted. So, I'd be like oww when is she going to post, like when is she going to post part 4 of like this certain series and stuff. (RP1, 2019)

This comment from Research Participant One highlighted how YouTubers attract their users to keep them waiting for more content to be posted by using series to keep their interest and leave them on a cliff hanger wanted more.

Research Participant Four also commented on how they look for familiar content being uploaded on YouTube by the creators they are subscribed to:

I think I don't like anything out the ordinary. I like it to be like content like I expect to see so ... If they suddenly do something completely different, I wouldn't really enjoy that cause it's not what I expected to see ... I do expect to see a similar sort of videos, similar style. (RP4, 2019)

Familiarity within content also seems to be a key factor as to why YouTube users return to SNS. Similarly, Research Participant Two discussed why they watched content from the same YouTuber and explained that for:

The most part this is definitely like a familiarity of... of the of what kind of content they have. (RP2, 2019)

People will go back to watch them more and more and they'll get used to that kind of content and want to watch them. (RP2, 2019)

This participant highlights the importance of genre of content and the expectations set out by the users. YouTube offers a categorisation system identifying different genres of content; the Trending page offers the genres Music, Gaming, News, Films and Fashion & Beauty. It is within these categories that further recommendations are made based on similarity of content. Grant (2007) explains how genre seeks to “tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations” (p. 1) and these subcategories provide comfort for the user in knowing which genre of content they are about to consume. It is therefore expected that when a user’s needs are not fulfilled by the content in these genres, the creator will get less views. This solidifies the reasoning behind content creators implementing repeat concepts and ideas within their content, creating series and general themes of genre for their channel. It is these genres within YouTube that allow the distinguishing categories of communities such as “the beauty community” or “gaming community” which fans can associate themselves with.

However, Simonsen (2011) argues that “the categories are generally too wide and thematically tied” and “some of the categories refer to already existing genres, which on YouTube involve divergent connotations, since the video format and process of producing and consuming differ from other types of audio-visual broadcasting” (p. 75). The concept of UGC enables the viewer to create content that may be difficult to categorise into certain genres, such as vlogging, fictional content, music videos and more. Whilst “some of the videos correspond with the proposed category”, the scope and freedom of content available on YouTube may fail to meet genre-based expectations. This is where the features of YouTube, previously discussed, including suggested channels and videos assist the user as opposed to categorisation.

3.3 Content Diversity

With the entry levels into YouTube being extremely low, the content within YouTube has been able to expand in order to create an extremely large collection of varied video content. Given the diversity of content available on YouTube and as of “May 2019, more than 500 hours of video were uploaded to YouTube every minute” (Clement, 2019, p. 1), users of YouTube are

continuously growing, and therefore their preferences are changing. Research Participant One stated that:

my choices of what I watch on YouTube is definitely affected by what entertains me. (RP1, 2019)

With what we as consumers define as entertaining changing on a daily basis it comes to no surprise that YouTube facilitates the upload of many different genres of entertainment in order to push the boundaries of content on a daily basis. It is also subsequently how the popularity of certain content on YouTube continuously changes.

Within the questionnaire, question four asked participants what category of YouTube videos they watched, from most watched to least, out of a series of options (see figure 4D). These options were: lifestyle, gaming, vlogs, beauty, comedy, DIY and music. The top three most popular results were music at 34.19%, comedy at 29.91% and lifestyle at 18/80% followed by vlogs, beauty, DIY and finally gaming.

It comes as no surprise that music was ranked the top genre of content consumed on YouTube. According to Social Blade (2020), within the top ten most subscribed YouTube channels in the United Kingdom, six of these were music channels and/or musicians.

In the beginning of YouTube's development, the foundations were built on YouTube and the partnerships it developed. Crick (2016) explained that these partnerships were strategic and first created a music provider known as VEVO which "allowed YouTube to increase the number of professionally produced music videos hosted by companies such as Sony and Universal" (p. 37). This partnership allowed for YouTube to increase its popularity and catalyze YouTube dramatically by providing music videos for its users.

The algorithm and advertising within YouTube are often concepts that are debated a lot amongst content creators, users and also academic researchers. Crick (2016) highlighted the issues with how content reaches its users through advertising and recommended videos.

"while the overall numbers of videos might represent a fair split between UGC videos and professionally produced videos, because of Google's predictive and

advertising technologies, the recommended videos, tailored to the individual visitor after a few visits, represent primarily professionally produced video content. The Popular on YouTube, Music, Movies and News channels in 2014 were typically dominated by professional video content.” (p. 31)

Research Participant Two reinforces this idea during their interview highlighting that:

I am subscribed to the YouTubers that I watch it's just sometimes the content doesn't reach out in my subscriptions. (RP2, 2019)

With this and the combination of both the YouTube's partnerships within the music industry and also the top subscribed YouTube channels being music based, it was anticipated that music was rated the highest consumed within the primary research. Prior to the integration of music streaming platforms such as Spotify, Tidal, Amazon Music and Deezer, music was either available for purchase or able to consume when watching music videos. Before YouTube, music videos were only available to view on television, in pre-created structures, based on popularity at the given time; “traditional music television programming worked much like a radio broadcast model” (Edmond, 2014, p. 311).

However, after the development of YouTube, the platform became a resource for “artists that allow them to refine, augment, and transform their crafts” (Cayari, 2011, p. 2) and for audiences to search and choose the music videos that they desire to watch. YouTube and video sharing sites enabled this change and reshaped the music video industry; “Music videos are now characterized by the searchable and on-demand nature of online exhibition, an amplified variety and a greatly expanded definition of what might be considered a music video” (Edmond, 2014, p. 313). Whilst music streaming platforms, mentioned above, now allow choice for the user in their listening habits, YouTube remains a large representative of visual music consumption. Furthermore, “music videos have become some of the most “viral” of all online video content” (Edmond, 2014, p. 316) due to the features and availability of the platform.

Whilst the individual factors discussed within this individually contributed to the growth of YouTube, there are several factors and themes that were discussed which intersect and directly contribute towards this. For example, when previously discussing YouTube's content diversity,

a large contributing factor which has steered this will be audience, their sense of community and desire to belong. This will be discussed in more detail in the audience section.

3.4 Advertisement Placements Within YouTube

In mid-2007, YouTube created its Partner Program which allowed revenue to be generated from advertisements on the SNS. This helped YouTube to establish and facilitate economic associations and moreover help to increase its consumption (Crick, 2006, pp. 37-38). This partnership allowed advertisements to be placed before, in between and around video content being uploaded onto YouTube.

When participants within this research were asked if they had ever purchased something from YouTube, upon first glance the results were extremely split between yes and no (see figure 4L). After closer analysis, it was clear that 82.69% of respondents said they had purchased something because of YouTube were aged 16 – 34 years old. This follows on to support that interviewers' questionnaire results which targeted this age group, with all participants answering yes to having purchased something because of YouTube. This confirms that 16 – 34 year olds as the most persuaded by YouTuber's thoughts and hold their opinions and views with higher regards. This furthermore means that this age groups is more likely to be influenced and acted upon YouTuber's content.

During their interview Research Participant One delved into the reason behind why they watch adverts within YouTube content:

I was watching someone's video, and someone told me that if you watch the entire advert they get like more money and so I'm like yeah I'll watch this advert for you like do you know what I mean? Erm, because it makes you feel like you're like supporting them. Like I love YouTube and I think the more people that can earn from it and things like that the more that it's going to continue to thrive... I think it's great that people can like earn a living from something that provides so much entertainment. (RP1, 2019)

The research participant highlights how they consume advertising content within YouTube in order to not only support the content creator but also the industry as a whole. They mention later, during their interview, how Vine shut down because of the lack of economic structure:

I used to love Vine and that shut down because people didn't earn money from it. (RP1, 2019)

The introduction of advertising creating a new form of revenue within YouTube has allowed the industry to increase its economical stature and invest more into the SNS allow it to cultivate and catalysis its growth. However, it has been stressed by Siva Vaidhyanathan (2012) that content creators are ‘laborers’ to YouTube and Google; “We could say Google is taking a free ride on the creative content of billions of content creators... it’s hardly a fairly negotiated arrangement” (p. 30). This saw a slowly shift in content as the introduction of sponsored content began.

This type of content allowed for advertising products to be placed or featured within the SNS amongst YouTube content, without drawing the user away from the page. YouTube has facilitated “Brands [to] have a near-term opportunity to partner with these starts for cost-efficient ways of reach large audiences” with “amateurs are being watched more frequently than most television shows.” (Nalty and Scott, 2010, p. 3). It is therefore not surprising that YouTube is significantly accountable for advertising redundancies in traditional media outlets such as television (Crick, 2016, p. xvi).

However, there were many issues in relation to this type of content. This form of advertising involved businesses approaching content creators directly with contract deals in exchange to be feature in the content creators’ video. This meant that marketers of Web 2.0 could use YouTube content to “advertise without appearing to do so – by creating and place commercial message that appear to be genuine content” (Keen, 2011, p. 89), which was not always considered as honest practice.

In the earlier years of sponsored content, this cause a lot of speculation as it was unclear to users as to whether opinions were truthful or had an unknown profitable gain. In recent years, content creators across all SNSs have a legal obligation to disclose whether any content uploaded features any sponsored or paid for content giving transparency to the user.

This form of advertising allowed for content creators to substantially grow their income in addition to what they received from advertising revenue. Therefore “dozens of amateurs have

quit their day jobs and are living comfortably from YouTube advertising sharing and revenue from sponsored videos” (Nalty and Scott, 2010, p. 124). However, during the interview process of this research, some issues were uncovered with this.

Research Participant One who had previously stated they would watch YouTube adverts during YouTube content to support the industry and creator also expressed their opinion on how content creators change when their income and status increases:

you can tell 100% when a YouTuber is like now starting to get loads of money because their content does change... Most cases for the worst...I'm not rich...like it is not relatable. (RP1, 2019)

Other research participants within the interview also expressed concerns with advertising content which was received directly from the content creator rather than YouTube itself:

If it's not like sponsored content and they're just saying that for the sake of it. (RP2, 2019)

This concern discussed by participants highlights the idea of authenticity of this form of advertising content. This is further discussed in Chapter Four, Content Creators. Consumers of YouTube sponsored content are unsure where the content creators' priorities are with the business contract and money or their own morals, values and opinion to the product being featured. Research Participant Three emphasised this concern during their interview highlighting their uncertainty with sponsored content:

But also sometimes they promote video promote objects or products that they don't really know about, they're just promoting it because they're getting money. (RP3, 2019)

Moreover, YouTube could be described as “a long commercial break dressed up as democratized media” (Keen, 2011, p. 91) however, whether the user of YouTube content agrees with sponsored content and advertising on this SNS, there is no doubt that this form of content has allowed for a highly significant growth in the platform. Crick (2016) evaluated the effect of YouTube's advertising content explaining that “on a massive scale YouTube has

expanded its user profiles, traffic and video uploads...YouTube's economical influence and unique Google-inspired advertising model continues to drive traffic to the website" (p. 45). This increased drive in traffic to YouTube, has increased its economic structure, allowing not only YouTube to financially benefit but also its content creators. Klein (2009) argues that users are "blind to the alluring images of advertising and deaf to the empty promises of celebrity spokespersons" (p. 14) and it could be this blindness that draws users to consume this form of content.

With creators earning more income from the site and migrating their fulltime employment to YouTube by becoming part of the Partnership Program, more content is being uploaded to the SNS, reaching a wider and more diverse users. As Research Participant One stated:

Whereas no, you hear of people like you hear of Shane Dawson's like content and you're like wow that's really cool I need to watch that kind of thing... and I dunno, like things... and and... more people watch it the more you hear about it. (RP1, 2019)

This means that YouTube content reaches a higher volume of SNS users and has contributed to the growth and expansion of YouTube to society.

Although during the questionnaire results, content was rated second by participants in relation to the importance of YouTube's growth (see figure 4O), participants expressed that content was the main reason they returned to YouTube regularly (see figure 4F and 4G). This confirms that whilst participants may not have seen content as an important factor in YouTube's growth, content is still a contributing factor for the continuous traffic towards the SNS. Without this traffic to the site, it would have failed to become as significant in society as it currently is as without reaching the site, the content cannot be valued. YouTube could have potentially been shut down due to economic status similar to Vine without the magnitude of content creation.

Furthermore, a connection that can be made between the theme of advertising within YouTube is between advertising and consumer capital. The sense of belonging, previously discussed, could be amplified by the advertising within YouTube. Whilst the sense of belonging can be located within the community aspect of YouTube, YouTuber's who advertise and recommend expenditure offer another pathway into becoming accepted by the YouTuber and other users.

Conclusion

It can be said that “YouTube and online video service have yielded new patterns of television watching” (Kim, 2012, p. 54) however it is the diversity and variety of the content that has allowed YouTube to truly flourish.

Unlike television channels, for example the BBC, whose purpose is to "to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain" (BBC, 2020), YouTube feels that “that everyone deserves to have a voice, and that the world is a better place when we listen, share and build a community through our stories” (YouTube, 2020). This further exemplifies the differences between traditional media forms and modern digital media, despite their similar popularity.

YouTube pushes the boundaries through its content by permitting any user to create the content themselves, challenging traditional forms of media. This push and drive of user-generated content “at more than a billion uploads per second” (Crick, 2016, p. xii) is something that television and traditional media fail to provide. With YouTube harvesting “more content and viewers than any television network” (Nalty and Scott, 2010, p. 2), this increased traffic to the SNS has catalysed its growth and importance in today’s society. This chapter has summarised the importance of content diversity and its’ distinguishing features from other media forms as well as how this has affected YouTube’s development.

Chapter Four – Content Creators

Introduction

In this chapter the exploration of content creators as individuals will be discussed, and an investigation will be conducted into how the personalities behind the content on YouTube have contributed to its growth. The transition of SNS content creators into celebrities will be examined, debated and evaluated using primary research with the application of secondary research. The argument will be divided by characteristic type of the individual and how this contributes to their popularity. In summary, the following chapter will discuss the idea of YouTubers as celebrities and then dissect characteristics and traits of YouTubers into trust, assets, talent and personality.

In accordance with the previous chapter, in their interview Research Participant Three stated that the increased popularity on YouTube goes hand in hand with the content uploaded and the personality behind the creation:

Content and personality. Definitely. I feel like those two. If you don't have good personality and don't come across... like, I don't know how to explain it but if you if you've come across a bit like snobbish and a bit like you don't care you're just making videos because you can cause you know that you'll get an audience, make money off your content is not going to be as great, but if you have a great personality and you're making it because you want to make then your content is gunna be better. (RP3, 2019)

Content creators have become a vital contributor towards the development of the Web 2.0 as they have converted from solely passive consumers of the web to co-developers and content contributors, providing UGC on SNSs (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008, p.233). Without content creators publishing UGC onto SNSs like YouTube, these sites would subsequently suffer from a lack of diversity and would lose their unique selling point (USP) of a democratized platform. It is this original and creative content and the ability to allow anyone to contribute, that has drawn users away from traditional media forms like television towards this new media form.

Dijk (2013) highlights how users of the SNSs have become an important part of the development of these sites, “it is a truism to say that media has historically coevolved with the public that uses them” (p. 5). The majority of users that began accessing SNSs like YouTube have now evolved with the site and become active contributors via their own content creation or commenting on, liking/disliking and/or sharing other videos. With the Web 2.0 facilitating the contributions of its user to SNSs like YouTube, which has now allowed over one billion hours of video content to be video viewed every day to date (YouTube, 2020), it is important for content to stand out in order to gain popularity and we will discuss below how many use certain personality traits to achieve this.

With the rise in UGC and masses of content becoming available to the users of SNSs, content creators began investigating different tactics that would enable them to stand out. Thomas, Hunter, Lobato and Richardson (2014) detail how the “rise in Web 2.0 has pushed the amateur to the forefront of public discourse... amateur producers are now seen as key drivers of the creative economy” (p. i). Content creators became YouTube personalities, similar to the social media influencers that were prevalent on other sites such as Instagram and Facebook. Deller and Murphy (2019) furthermore highlights that “While user-created videos take many forms, we are concerned here with personality driven content, where creators appear front-and-centre” (p. 114) and it is this content on YouTube that truly flourishes to discover newfound celebrities.

It is significant contributing factor that many YouTube users spend hours absorbing this UGC daily and the reason behind will be evaluated from the primary research conducted during this research. Analysis of this data revealed key themes in relation to content creators and these will be explored, analysed and debated within this chapter.

4.1 Are YouTubers Celebrities?

Cashmore (2006) discussed celebrity culture and how the evolution of the celebrity world began. They detailed that overtime there were triggers, conditions and causes which created celebrity culture and our fascination with celebrity figures, creating a timeline of all these events (p. 2). This has led to society having a “preoccupation with famous persons whose lives never intersect with our own and whose fortunes make no material difference to us” (Cashmore, 2006, p. 1). This in turn, explains the increased viewership of celebrity YouTubers and creates a differentiation between a casual uploader and one earning their living via uploads and brand deals.

SNSs, particularly YouTube, have allowed ordinary individuals to showcase their evolution into a new form of celebrity (Burgess, Green, Jenkins and Hartley, 2013, p. 23). Through the exhibition of themselves in their content, content creators have excelled their popularity to gain this new form of celebrity status.

This exhibition is defined by Senft (2013, pp. 346 – 354) as the distribution of corporate and branded video content of oneself through online technologies such as YouTube. Senft called this the ‘microcelebrity’ by which individuals would build and preserve an online presence and identity which they can use in order to gain an income and create their own brand.

The exhibition of themselves has allowed YouTubers’ content to grow in popularity and expand furthermore increasing their audience reach. Research Participant One stated in their interview when asked why that believe that YouTubers have excelled in popularity that:

I'd definitely say that the fact that YouTubers themselves become more like celebrity like. (RP1, 2019)

Rindova, Pollock and Hayward (2006) define one celebrity characteristic as “a social actor attracts largescale public attention: the greater the number of people who know of and pay attention to the actor, the greater the extent and value of that actor’s celebrity” (pp. 50 – 51). With YouTube grown in popularity from its thousands of videos content and views, it is therefore no surprise that a new form of celebrity has evolved from this media platform, in that of the microcelebrity.

These microcelebrities have also began to embody themselves in traditional consumption. An example of this would be ‘NikkieTutorials’. Nikkie began her channel with a minimal amount of makeup and experience in the beauty industry. After gaining popularity and growing her channel on YouTube, Nikkie now has opportunities available only to those who have a following and fanbase, like that of a celebrity. After several collaborations with large beauty brands including Too Faced and featuring on her own TV show, Nikkie may be more recognisable now as a celebrity in the traditional definition, due to the scope of her reach. Not only does YouTube allow these individuals to flourish, but their involvement on the site brings in views from other platforms and associated media that they have an influence on.

This is an instance where a YouTuber branches away from purely online interaction with fans, creating a physical product to market in collaboration with other well-known brands. This is in order to reach a common goal, further growth. Whilst the YouTuber, in this circumstance NikkieTutorials, is often paid for these collaborations, they are able to bring their fandom into the client base of the collaborating company, i.e. TooFaced, and increase sales. A fandom can be defined as “the self-selected organization of a group of fans who both enjoy an extant media object, and who create additional content about that extant media object” (Booth, 2010, p. 22)

Research Participant Two discussed in their interview that the concept of fandoms is more than just the average viewer, suggesting that:

"a fandom is where you get a viewer, but they go a little over like more they'll do more for the YouTuber [...] like if a YouTuber was launching merch, that's what the fandom would really really want because... because they want to support the creator." (RP2, 2019)

In turn, those who regularly purchase products within the beauty industry or specifically from this brand are likely to be influenced to visit the YouTube of the collaborating personality, increasing traffic to their channel. Essentially, this is a convergence of celebrity endorsement which is widely seen in traditional media formats from similar brands, now integrating YouTube stars; "celebrity endorsement is widely used in marketing because marketers believe that celebrities attract the attention of consumers and the celebrities' positive traits are transferred to the endorsed brands" (Chung and Cho, 2017. p.481). These positive traits will be discussed later in the personality discussion.

The growth in a YouTuber's audience reach, gradually allows them to be able to financially rely on their YouTube career, looking to receive an income either full time or part time. This transition enables the YouTuber to invest more time and money into the platform and subsequently grow their following and income even further. As discussed in chapter three, Content, the YouTuber, especially the microcelebrity, brings increased revenue to YouTube through attracting larger audiences and therefore increasing advertisement viewership. This is therefore a mutually beneficial partnership between YouTube and the identified celebrity.

The development and need for social talent agencies have allowed YouTube channels and content creators to work with brands, facilitating cross platform collaborations increasing YouTubers income through advertising and branding (Lobato, 2016, p. 349). This gradual increase in following and content eventually opens the pathway to a form of celebrity status. A celebrity status allows the YouTuber to gain mainstream media attention furthermore escalating their popularity reinforcing their celebrity status and moreover YouTube as a whole.

Graeme Turner has opened many discussions with his academic research on celebrities and conducted analysis on aspects that have formed this new type of celebrity. Turner (2010) discusses, how there has been a programmatic shift from the elite to ordinary through different social media platforms. These platforms have allowed the capacity for ordinary individuals to achieve celebrity elite status through “intrinsic ordinariness” (p. 12). Some content creators on YouTube have utilised their trait of ‘ordinariness’ in order to build up their audience and platform.

YouTube therefore has catalysed the growth of this new form of celebrity, substantially increasing the growth of the SNS overall. Kyncl and Peyvan (2017) highlight how the definition of celebrity has altered with the growth of content creator’s popularity on SNSs; “It has redefined what it means to be a celebrity and who can become one. It has thrust[ed] new people in the spotlight who understand that fame has changed” (2017, p. x). It is this change in how fame can be acquired that has cultivated YouTube.

However, during the conduction of primary research, there were contrasting views on YouTubers as celebrities. Participants involved in the questionnaire were asked at question nine if they viewed YouTubers as celebrities (see figure 4K). The response to this question was clearly divided with 55.56% of respondents not deeming YouTubers as celebrities. An evaluation of the participants that stated YouTubers as celebrities, 89.58% were under the age of thirty-four years old.

On the other hand, during the interview process, all participants viewed YouTubers as having a celebrity status although some explained that there is a variation in the type of celebrity that YouTubers are. Research Participant Three stated the below when asked if they view YouTubers as celebrities:

Yeah but also put them in a different category to other celebrities. So, like the celebrities that made their fame by like singing or acting like they're a different kind of celebrity... I'd say like celebrities that have like made their fame like acting and that lot... like it's sort of like on a higher pedestal compared to YouTubers. And I'd feel, I feel like those... those celebrities wouldn't look at YouTubers as celebrities... I think I feel like some people wouldn't say that they were celebrities that they don't deserve the celebrity status because of what they do. (RP3, 2019)

This idea of a different classification of celebrity for YouTubers and celebrities that have acquired their fame through social media platforms, is a concept that has been discussed by many academic researchers throughout the years. 'Proper' and 'improper' celebrities is a term used to define the two types of celebrities within society. A proper celebrity is defined by Allen and Mendick (2013) as an individual who has achieved their celebrity status through hard work, talent and achievements (p. 7). On the other hand, an improper celebrity is outlined as an individual who is:

“lacking moral and economic value: their fame is constructed as accidental, improper, achieved not through labour (hard work, education, training or the application of talent and ability) but through luck, manipulation or proximity to other celebrities. They represent the undeserving and the undesirable. Indeed, the ‘celebrity chav’ and Reality TV star are associated with the proliferation of ‘easy’ pathways to fame which are said to characterise modern celebrity” (Allen and Mendick, 2013p. 3).

Within these two definitions YouTuber's and furthermore any social media content creator are often defined as 'improper celebrities' as they have gained their celebrity status through “upload[ing] text, pictures and video instantly to a site from a personal computer or phone” (Labrecque, Markos and Milne, 2011, p. 38). With the entry barriers low into the YouTube community, the celebrification of these individuals is seen as an easier option and therefore less authentic or 'proper'. Turner (2004) details how “the modern celebrity may claim no special achievements other than the attraction of public attention” (p. 3) identifying the characteristics of content creators such as YouTubers.

However, it is this claim of normality that increases the appeal of YouTubers to society. Kyncl and Peyvan (2017) explain how “most people visit YouTube to watch something they can’t find anywhere else: a generation of auteurs and entertainers who have built their success on the platform” (p. xii). YouTube provides its audience with something that cannot be found anywhere else in traditional media outlets.

The comparison of normal celebrities who participants believed to have a talent and YouTubers was analysed during Research Participant One’s interview. They stated that traditional media celebrities have a talent and were asked to explain in more detail how they would compare these celebrities to YouTubers:

I think the two have been merging much more recently. For example, Will Smith just won like one of the upcoming YouTuber stars awards or something... was nominated for one. Whereas obviously he, I think, he's done much more impressive things than that. And I think that Jeffrey Star obviously he's a lot more than a YouTuber. He was a singer. He got signed by like I dunno who was... Usher someone like that. So, they're definitely like mingle. (RP1, 2019)

With the growth of improper celebrities through SNSs like YouTube due to the popularity of these SNSs, there has been a continuous gradual mergence between proper and improper celebrities. Later in their interview Research Participant One states this highlight that:

So they [YouTubers] get to mingle with normal celebrities like proper celebrities (RP1, 2019)

This merging of these celebrities and moreover exposure for YouTubers into the public eye has catalysed the YouTube industry. With the cross promotion of YouTube content creators into traditional media platforms through these ‘proper’ celebrities, YouTube star are able to reach a wider audience than ever before furthermore driving their content to reach a wider demographic audience increasing its popularity. However, in order for these improper celebrities to sustain and solidify their place within the celebrity hierarchy there are certain characteristics these individuals need to obtain.

4.2 Positive Traits of YouTubers

With over one billion hours of video content being consumed on YouTube every day and over two billion users (YouTube, 2020, p. 1) it is vital for a YouTuber to stand out in order to gain and retain a larger following and acquire their status. During their interview, Research Participant Four discussed the multitudes of YouTube content that is currently available and how content creators stand out:

There's a lot of content out there and you need to have this sort of personality and charisma about you that differentiates you from everyone else. (RP4, 2019)

The research participant clearly highlights how they believe that having a personality within your content on YouTube will allow your content to flourish. Cocker and Cronin (2017) explain in their work how the fame of a celebrity is reliant on the individuals standing out due their personality in order to allow them to grow their fame in their area (pp. 457 – 458). It is this representation of personality and characteristics one acquires that enables an individual to grow and expand their fame and moreover the popularity of their content and YouTube. Research Participant Three highlighted this correlation between YouTubers stating:

YouTubers in general all quite often have similar personalities. (RP3, 2019)

It is these attributes that represent a content creator gradually creating their own individual brand. Their personal characteristics and personality are what is associated with them and what they represent. Aaker (1997) used the term ‘Brand Personality’ defining this as the set of human characteristics associated with the brand” (p. 347). Any content that these individuals create and publish continues to contribute and build their personal brand.

When examining the characteristics of a content creator’s brand personality there were many factors that contributed to this. Many YouTubers have used their personality and cultivated this into a brand. YouTuber, Zoe Sugg, also known online as ‘Zoella’ is a key example of this. Zoe has created not only a YouTube channel and blog under the personality ‘Zoella’ but also expanded to develop a beauty and lifestyle brand building on this online persona Zoella.

It is therefore important to investigate the individual traits that contribute to an individual’s brand personality. The analysis of this was undertaken in the interviews and has culminated

several traits which the research participants found to be fundamental in improving the visibility and growth of a YouTuber and their channel. These are categorised into trust, assets, talent and personality.

4.3 The Trait of Trust

In order for an individual to obtain and preserve a celebrity status they must ensure that their audience has a degree of trust within them. Jin and Phau (2014) state that individuals have a greater trust in the someone who has a larger following as these individuals are usually in the spotlight and have an audience who can expand their reach through reposts on SNSs (p. 182). This allowed their content to gain credibility and therefore is more likely to be consumed.

The value of being a trustworthy individual was discussed by Research Participant One and Research Participant Two in their questionnaires and interviews. This prioritised the commercial aspect of the YouTuber in terms of products and reviews, both paid for and free. Research Participant 1 uses the concept of trust as a distinguishing feature between traditional celebrities and YouTubers:

If a celebrity tried to market a piece of makeup to me I would be much less likely to buy it... I just think 'oh they're just doing it because it's a celebrity face' whereas if I know Youtubers like put their name to it kind of thing that they say they like it, like... I'm much more likely to trust them because I think they've got a lot more to lose than a celebrity. They could lose like their integrity and stuff on YouTube and lose all their subscribers. Whereas, a celebrity if they get like, if someone's like 'actually that product is rubbish' they're just going to be like 'yeah I know but I got paid to do it'. (RP1, 2019)

This explanation summarises Research Participant One's opinion on the authenticity and integrity of YouTubers and how this contributes to their opinion of them. Authenticity, however, is not necessarily considered a natural skill which accompanies every YouTuber or vlogger. Each person exhibiting authenticity "has an intrinsic value based on their possession of a singular, intrinsic, and moreover, marketable skill; it also implies that success is wrapped up in a sense of the authentic self" (Marwick, 2013, p.198) This is intrinsic to creating a personal association with the user as being 'ordinary'. The value of authenticity, primarily in the modern media, has increased in the 21st Century as "in a world in which anyone can curate

how they are seen on social media, the importance of appearing genuine and accessible has only grown” (Kyncl and Peyvan, 2017, p. 45).

In terms of YouTube and trust, authenticity is fundamental to identifying and believing the individual’s passion for what is being discussed. Research Participant One discussed this in their interview when asked about trust:

I know YouTubers just start out, they start out with makeup as like just a lover of makeup because they're not normally like makeup artists... They can test it and I know I'm more trusting of their opinion because I know where they kind of started was like where I kind of am at. (RP1, 2019)

In accordance with this, the “visibility of ordinary people, and their associated ‘celebrification’, is considered to be advancing the processes of democracy” (Williamson, 2016. p.101), broadening the spectrum of public opinions and values. Content creators on YouTube apply the use of their ‘ordinariness’ with the discussion of their own individual interests and opinions which allows the user to identify an emotional similarity with the YouTuber forming a bond between the two individuals.

It is also said that “once the celebrity is positioned as authentic, the values and ideologies she symbolizes also become real and culturally resonant” (Meyers, 2009, p. 895), therefore users will be more invested into the YouTuber’s content, consuming it more, as they believe their opinion and voice has a relevance in society.

During their interview Research Participant One spoke about the connection they have with content creators on YouTube:

It's so weird how you feel like a connection with someone you don't actually know... from something that provides so much entertainment and it's like real entertainment... it's like real life people it's not like not acting or anything. (RP1, 2019)

This bond is what encourages the user to continuously indulge in the YouTuber’s content and furthermore builds up the content creators celebrity status and image (Turner, 2010, p. 12). The

progression of a YouTube content creator to a celebrity allows their content to gain more exposure furthermore promoting YouTube content catalysing its growth within society. This connection is intrinsic to trust, as is the appeal of the YouTuber's authenticity and 'ordinariness'.

Research Participant One also qualified their amount of trust in YouTubers with the documentation and reference of their past videos, identifying previous opinions and reviews as valuable:

If a celebrity tried to market a piece of makeup to me I would be much less likely to buy it because I don't know that they have like this love of makeup that I know a lot of YouTubers have and they like don't appreciate certain products and things like that. And I can't look back at different makeup products they've tried and things like that. (RP1, 2019)

With YouTube facilitating the backdate of content, unlike a lot of traditional media forms until recent years, the user can build up trust with the individual and backdate their information in order to ensure validity of their content. This increase in the validity of a YouTuber's content increases the likelihood of their content being consumed, popularising their content and the SNS as a whole.

4.4 Assets as a Trait

The next trait depicted from the research was assets owned by an individual. How these assets are perceived are dependent on the demographic of the user. Rindova, Pollock and Hayward (2006) explain in their academic work how an individual can become popularising in society by having a greater following and this is showcased through their assets owned and displayed to their audience (pp. 50 – 51).

Being a YouTuber who has acquired a greater following can expose them to different opportunities that a typical viewer may not be by receiving PR packages or testing products on a review basis. By exhibiting this to the audience, who already have a level of trust due to previous experience with the channel, the YouTuber is able to use their assets to gain viewers as a whole. Research Participants One and Two supports the idea that the assets owned by an

individual, increases the user's trust and therefore they are more likely to consume their content:

They just love the product and they know they're going to do makeup which is kind of where I am. Like I love makeup and I love playing with makeup and then they have more opportunities to test it than I do like because they get sent PR and they have the money to go and buy these things. They can test it and I know I'm more trusting of their opinion because I know where they kind of started was like where I kind of am at. (RP1, 2019)

If it was, say like they... they do reviews on a set of products like a mic, microphone for example, then I would say I would probably trust them more than just someone reviewing it on the website because they know they've had experience with a microphone, they actually have the microphone and they can talk about it. (RP2, 2019)

Therefore, it is these assets that an individual owns, mainly obtainable due to their celebrity status which allows them to receive PR, that furthermore enhances their credibility and trust. Research Participant Four also explains how they aspire to the glamorised life these YouTubers exhibit on their YouTube channel:

But that's maybe what I maybe aspire my lifestyle to be like that because they have this sort of glamorized life and they have a big house, what looks like a perfect family and everything, there is nothing wrong with any of them. (RP4, 2019)

I just think, I just aspire their lifestyle I think someone... it's not necessary the person it's the life that they lead. (RP4, 2019)

The amplification of YouTuber's assets through their content has the potential to increase their popularity on YouTube and moreover the SNS as it reaches a larger demographic audience who idealise this lifestyle they lead.

From the primary research conducted, the factors that distinguished a YouTuber from a content creator is the assets and wealth that the individual possesses. Whilst the wealth of a celebrity may not decrease their viewer count or subscribers, it may change the way their content comes across:

you can tell 100% when a YouTuber is like now starting to get loads of money because their content does change... I'm not rich and I don't like... I don't really want to see videos about them like shopping in Gucci and stuff like that because I can't shop at Gucci, like it's not relatable whereas I'd rather watch someone like talk about how they bought loads of stuff at IKEA (RP1, 2019)

The development of these assets may in turn make the YouTuber less ordinary to the viewer, moving them into the celebrity lifestyle as a result of their wealth and assets:

I think of like Shane Dawson as a celebrity because he has like this huge house in like L.A. (RP1, 2019)

Shane Dawson is used here as an example of a YouTuber who gained wealth and celebrity status due to the income provided by his subscribers on the SNS.

However, through the analysis of my own YouTube consumption habits, it is noticeable that a significant portion of largely famous YouTubers on the platform gain a following due to their lavish lifestyle, allowing a sneak peek into the life of a wealthy individual. This aspect relates more closely to the voyeuristic use of YouTube for the viewer, to be discussed in the following Audience chapter. For example, Jake Paul, his family and friends utilise their wealth and assets to attract followers, exemplified in the titles of his videos; '*I caught them destroying my Lamborghini*', '*Our \$250,000 dollar date*' and '*I spent \$1 Million dollars on this vacation*'.

The assets and fame both individuals have acquired has provided exposure for YouTube. This is due to their large following providing them with value within society. Therefore, this increased celebrity status has pushed the SNS YouTube into the forefront of society due to their content being mainly placed on this site.

4.5 The Talent of YouTubers

Another trait that was frequently discussed within the interviews was the concept of talent which can be considered as what is missing for those discussed above who use their wealth to attract their audience.

Research Participant Two was questioned during their interview as to whether YouTubers have talent or not. Their response consisted of the following:

They definitely have talent. Some YouTube I cannot say they definitely do, but for the most part they definitely have talent. (RP2, 2019)

Research Participant Three however, considered the growth of an individual's business outside of YouTube as a talent within itself, specifically stated when asked if YouTuber Zoella was talented:

I'd say yeah. She's built like a really big industry just outside of her YouTube as well. (RP3, 2019)

This statement related back to the idea of YouTuber's assets and the industry around them upholding their celebrity status. In my own instance, it may be the YouTuber's personality that allows them to shine through on YouTube, build and accumulate their celebrity status but it is then their assets and how they exhibit their fame with their new found status that ensure longevity of their fame.

Further on into this interview with Research Participant Three, when asked what exactly a YouTuber's talent is, they struggled to answer:

I wouldn't know. I don't know (RP3, 2019)

In his academic work Keen (2011) reflects on this and how he believes YouTube amateurs have taken over the Internet with no real talent or skill:

“And instead of creation masterpieces, these millions and millions of exuberant monkeys – many with no more talent in the creative arts than our primate

cousins – are creating an endless digital forest of mediocrity” (pp. 2-3) “The site is an infinite gallery of amateur movies showing poor fools dancing, singing, eating, washing, shopping, driving, cleaning, sleeping, or just staring into their computers” (p. 5)

However as Keen later goes on to explain, it is this form of content that users wish to consume daily (Keen, 2011, p. 6). It was also highlighted within the primary research by many participants that that personality itself can be seen as a talent (RP3, 2019).

4.6 Do YouTubers Have A Personality?

For this study, personality is considered as a quality that a YouTuber could lack. In all four interviews the participants discussed the concept of ‘personality’ as the driving force behind popularity on YouTube.

Research Participant Two and Four highlighted the importance of a YouTuber needing a personality in order to stand out amongst all the content that is available on YouTube:

You have to have almost a personality now to shine out on YouTube. (RP2, 2019)

I think they need to have like... a have like... something about they, need to have a good personality. (RP4, 2019)

When participants were asked “Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTube video, if so, what are they?”, Research Participant Two answered:

I guess the personality first and foremost because without that you cannot really sit through a longer video. (RP2, 2019)

This statement from Research Participant Two highlights how a YouTuber must hold a personality in order to sustain viewers on their content. Having a strong personality and retaining your viewership will furthermore increase the popularity of your content.

Research Participant Three also argues that this is the key to success in attracting viewers, is personality:

“If they don’t have a great personality, if they’re a bit like dull and boring then people aren’t going to watch” (RP3, 2019)

With the dense and competitive amount of content on YouTube, the Research Participants discussed that in order to be successful and stand out, a content creator must have a noticeable personality:

YouTubers in general all quite often have similar personalities. They're all very happy and bubbly. (RP3, 2019)

So, I think they need to have like... a have like... something about they, need to have a good personality and be kind of like bubbly and upbeat. But also, not fake, not over exaggerate their personality too much... I think having a personality is like having like a charisma and standing out against other people...I think that’s what you need on YouTube (RP4, 2019)

All research participants discussed the idea that a personality has a large contribution to the growth of a content creator on YouTube. Having a personality encourages their audience to continuously consume their content and for the creator to make their content stand out and more enjoyable.

Conclusion

The growth of a YouTuber’s celebrity status provides them with a higher influence within those who consume media texts. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) explain how “consumers perceive individuals with a large number of subscribers as more attractive and trustworthy” (p. 1). Therefore, becoming more attractive to an audience may allow a higher celebrity status to be reached within society. Discussed within this section is the authenticity and relatability of the content creator and how this contributes to their influence on YouTube, increasing the use of the platform as a whole; whilst considered separate to traditional celebrities “YouTube celebrities are considered more authentic, approachable, and influential than mainstream celebrities” (Ferchaud et al., 2017, p. 88) which only adds to their appeal. This provides more

exposure to these individuals and their content. With their content being mainly on YouTube this will increase the traffic onto the SNS YouTube amplifying its growth.

This chapter summarises the views of the research participants, in that it is their active choice to consume content from specific individuals, based off of their own ideas of an entertaining, trustworthy and/or relatable individual. Ultimately, it can be considered that the availability of YouTube “personalities” is part of the platform’s niche appeal; “most people visit YouTube to watch something they can’t find anywhere else: a generation of auteurs and entertainers who have built success on the platform” (Kyncl and Peyvan, 2017, p. xii). Whilst talent and a display of one’s assets can assist a YouTuber in the growth of their channel, it is the content creator’s personalities that create fandoms, communities and a generally increased interest in their lives.

Chapter Five – YouTube User

Introduction

In terms of YouTube as a whole, from primary and secondary research it can be established that the SNS is used for four key purposes: uploading content to post, advertising, searching for content to watch, and interacting with content; the latter two involving the user of this SNS. The study of the SNS can explore the “technological delivery mechanism through which individuals experience, choose, participate, and create new knowledge” (Crick, 2016, p. 80). Ensuring users are fulfilled through their experience on the SNS allows for user satisfaction increasing the chances of them returning to the site in order to reciprocate this fulfilment and gratification.

The users of YouTube are the fundamentals of ensuring the site is successful by providing traffic to the site. It is this traffic that increases the popularity and gives exposure to the site allowing revenue to be made. YouTube gains its income through its advertising and Partnership programme dependant on users and views. This income is then split between YouTube and the content creators (Kim, 2012, p. 56). Therefore, without users visiting the SNS, YouTube would deny itself of an income and the SNS would cease to exist.

In this chapter, there will be a discussion concerning YouTube users as well as how and why their consumption of content on YouTube has grown. To explain this in detail, it is first necessary to comprehend the type of audiences that we are dealing with, referring to already established theory and scholarship. With users varying and being complex as they are, it is fundamental to truly dissect YouTube’s users to understand the role within the catalysis of YouTube’s growth.

5.1 Understanding the User

Within YouTube’s group of users there are many different forms of audience members that have evolved over time. Whilst each audience member is individual and are likely to have their own unique consumption habits, group-based identification (Hu et al, 2017, p. 595) enables the feeling of community and belonging that are essential to each of us according to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954). Snickars and Vonderau (2009) stated that “90 percent of online audiences never interact, nine percent interact only occasionally, and one percent do

most interacting” (p. 12) with those that do interact creating online communities within these SNSs.

It is easy to at first, divide the audience into Active and Passive as these categories are easily distinguishable; “At times audience members actively seek information to satisfy their needs and desires (e.g., Levy & Windahl, 1984). At other times, they use media more passively for diversion, out of habit, or simply to pass the time” (Hanson and Haridakis, 2008, p. 1). However, for this study, using the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory (1973) leads us towards assuming that the modern audience as a whole is almost entirely active; “for the Uses and Gratifications “paradigm”, the concept of the active audience is a key player” (Biocca, 1988, p. 52). To be an active audience member, the user does not necessarily have to interact with the content they consume but not to passively accept the information they received at face value. Although it is hard to quantify this, this does not mean that we assume all participants will be interactive with content, but that we can maintain that the participants of this study are active in their consumption due to their comments and opinions gathered in the research methods. It is therefore clear to see that the role of active viewers is a “dynamic process of negotiating the meaning” (Livingstone, 2000, p. 4).

In 1971, Katz, Haas and Gurevitch discussed the Uses and Gratifications of mass media and within their academic research discovered the classifying needs of mass media. With over thirty-five needs they then simplified these into five prominent meaningful groups:

“1. Needs related to strengthening information, knowledge, and understanding-these can be called cognitive needs; 2. Needs related to strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experience-or affective needs; 3. Needs related to strengthening credibility, confidence, stability, and status-these combine both cognitive and affective elements and can be labeled integrative needs; 4. Needs related to strengthening contact with family, friends, and the world. These can also be seen as performing an integrative function; 5. Needs related to escape or tension-release which we define in terms of the weakening of contact with self and one's social roles.” (Katz, Haas and Gurevitch, 1973, pp. 166 – 167)

Upon reflection of my primary research and the analysis of data gathered in relation to audience, it is evident that my finding corresponds with the five overarching groups coined by

Katz, Haas and Gurevitch. Therefore, these groups will be used to segregate the data and will be used to interpret the data analysis and create discussion on the importance of the audience in the growth of YouTube.

For the purpose of this research analysis these five groups will be labelled as the following: *Integrative Needs* will investigate how the media and the SNS YouTube in particular allow the increased stability and credibility of individuals. *Cognitive Need* which will discuss how the user aims to use mass media such as YouTube to build and gain knowledge and understanding from their consumption. *Social Integrated Needs* will furthermore explore how YouTube facilitated the strengthening of relationships and community through interactivity, creating an online community. *Affective Needs* will analyse the emotional feelings and pleasures the users experience whilst consuming media such as YouTube. Finally, *Tension Release Needs* will seek to explain how users of YouTube consume its content in order to escape real life and divert the tension they are currently experiencing.

A SNS meeting these above needs provides user satisfaction and allows the site to gratify a wider demographic audience who all have different objectives when using YouTube. Rubin (2002) explains the importance of Uses and Gratifications is the functions that media serves to its users rather than the influence it has on its users (p. 525). These functions provide the user with fulfilment and it is this fulfilment of needs to the users encourages them to return to the SNS in order to receive these gratifications again. With users returning to the site the traffic will continue allowing the popularity of the site to gradually increase.

5.2 Integrative Needs

In a general sense, “the media offer an appropriate location for the affirmation and reinforcement of the knowledge and awareness that you value” (West and Turner, 2010, p. 404). As viewers of content on YouTube, it is also a possibility to enable self-validation, boost confidence and feel secure and confident in one’s choices. “Social networking sites (SNSs), such as Facebook, provide abundant social comparison opportunities” (Vogel et al, 2014, p. 206) and as YouTube channels are built by visual UGC, the viewer is given the opportunity to relate with the content. For example, when asked what characteristics and attributes attract Research Participant One to a YouTuber, they stated:

Someone that I like... relate to I'd say (RP1, 2019)

Furthermore, because of the trust (discussed previously) that YouTubers can provide, it is a common pattern throughout the results of the interviews that the participants self-reflect and reconsider their choices:

For example, like there's a foundation that I love, and I saw one of my favourite YouTubers the other day saying that they hate it and I was like that's really weird, like why? And then it makes me second guess my foundation and things like that. But, I yeah I think it is important and it definitely affects the things that I buy and things that I think about. (RP1, 2019)

I suppose it just yeah being nosy looking at what people do day to day and compared and comparing it's to what I do daily. (RP4, 2019)

This creates validation and instils confidence that the viewer is living in the way that their role models are, offering comfort when watching. This not only enables the viewer to relate to the creator but offers a sense of stability and credibility. When this personal need is fulfilled and catharsis is created, the viewer may be encouraged to repeat this consumption, increasing their use of YouTube as a platform.

5.3 Cognitive Needs

One of Katz, Haas and Gretch's (1973) five key categories of Uses and Gratifications is cognitive needs, focusing on information consumption, gaining knowledge and understanding. The use of SNSs for "information seeking is driven by people's desire to increase awareness and knowledge of one's self, others, and the world" (Shao, 2008, p. 10) and on YouTube, there is a broad spectrum of tutorials, how to videos and generally informative reviews and other content.

Other studies have categorized the variety of content on YouTube in which many falls into the cognitive needs bracket; "Youtuber's videos run the gamut of imaginable topics, sitting under such broad categories as Science & Education, Music, Comedy and How-To & DIY" (Thompson, 2017, p. 811). In the undertaken questionnaire, nine respondents argued that YouTubers allow them to learn and that is why they are influential (question 8B). Research Participant Two supports this in their interview where they discuss learning:

A tech YouTuber is really good at explaining things then people want to learn more. (RP2, 2019)

This explanation contributes to the reasoning that there would be repeat visits from those interested in the learning and information side of YouTube. This repetition of visits would moreover increase the traffic towards the site pushing its popularity. Additionally, this creates a use of YouTube that can apply towards study or work life as well as entertainment; “YouTube is identified as a useful tool when users need to be informed about how to solve a problem encountered in their daily work” (Buf and Ștefăniță, 2020, p. 82). Research Participant Three discusses how they can take what they learn from YouTube and apply it to their own lives in the form of entertainment:

I'm a big gaming nerd. So, I like to watch people play their videos and then like I implement it into when I play my games. (RP3, 2019)

There is, however, a distinction between using YouTube for information, knowledge or understanding and using it to reflect or copy what is seen in the video's content which Research Participant One mentioned during their interview:

I'm obsessed with this girl Mia Maples because I kind of want to be her. So, I watch her videos cause she does things about like makeup and how she like things she wears and stuff, places she buys stuff from. (RP1, 2019)

This replication of content is what enables YouTubers to also name themselves as ‘influencers’, allowing for paid and unpaid advertising that promotes other brands; “YouTube, Instagram and Facebook bloggers often present the products they have tested providing their opinion or promoting them online to other users” (Sokolova and Kefi, 2019, p. 1). It is difficult to label this as informative as it is impossible to verify reviews and opinions as facts. These videos do, however, allow YouTube creators to gain Fandoms and a community with users that rely on their favourite individual's opinions.

Furthermore, the social aspect of YouTube, predominantly commenting, enables the extension of exchanging information after the video is uploaded. Khan (2017) explains how “YouTube

comments are least inhibited since they are usually not moderated and thus may offer valuable information to users in the most informal setting possible” (p. 240). Whilst only 29.91% of respondents to the questionnaire stated that they do comment on YouTube videos (see figure 4E), Research Participant Four discussed how they read through comments:

I might read through them myself to find out where something is from or something like that, but I don't, I don't necessarily comment or would have commented myself. (RP4, 2019)

I think from like looking in the comments sections and things, there's like this group of people that just demand things from YouTubers, they want to show their support. (RP4, 2019)

This not only enhances the voyeuristic quality of watching on YouTube but enables the gathering of further knowledge, understanding and information that the viewers may lack without this enabled feature. With YouTube facilitating this audience need of building knowledge and understand by providing informative content and enabling the exchange of information, YouTube can hold a valuable place within society. There can be seen to be “multiple components (i.e. learners, content contributors, social environment and user’s online behavior) within YouTube’s learning ecosystem that have contributed to the success of YouTube as a learning platform” (Zhou et al., 2020, p. 340). Being the main online video sharing platform, YouTube can continue to gain popularity through users who wish to seek informative and knowledgeable video content.

5.4 Social Integrated Needs

With the aforementioned growth of social networking sites in recent years, the added features on YouTube of commenting, liking and sharing enables a convergence of social and visual media. YouTube creators commonly extend their reach to alternative platforms including Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to build a community for their audience and allowing them to visualise “their social world through a collection of networked profiles” (Boyd, 2008, p. 122). Similar to information gathering, once a YouTuber has developed a following and their own ‘fan’ base or ‘fandom’, comments often seek to gather further information about the individual’s life and content.

Research Participant Two discussed how these fandoms hold an importance place for the content creator as these audience members ensure they consume their content:

fandom's more important than the general audience because they're there... they're very like a security blanket almost for... for the content creator because they know for sure that these people... the videos are definitely gonna reach them and the videos you know, gonna get support from them and they are going to support them no matter what. And I guess... I guess for just an avid viewer of the channel they don't... they'll probably watch one or two videos whereas a fandom will probably watch the entire every single video of their channel. (RP2, 2019)

This relates to Research Participant Four who mentioned:

“like looking in the comments sections and things, there's like this group of people that just demand things from YouTubers, they want to show their support. So, YouTubers create this sort of merch and then people buy it to show their support even if it's like, I dunno, cause merch doesn't really appeal to me.” (RP4, 2019)

Participant Four highlights how to be seen as a part of a content creators fandom, social interaction is required in order to showcase your dedication to the YouTuber. It is these community members that will ensure they consume the YouTuber's content regularly and validate their part through interactivity. As well as a way of communicating with other audience members, the commenting aspect of YouTube enables viewers to feel connected to the creator through interactivity;

Like the only time I can think of that I would of commented is asking like ‘what product is this’ like if they haven't mentioned it. (RP1, 2019)

Like, there's like one of my YouTubers recently their grandpa went into surgery, so I commented sending all my love life. It just shows support and... yeah. (RP3, 2019).

The social aspect of YouTube can be considered as important to fulfilling the psychological needs of the individual, according to Maslow (1954), including a sense of connection, friendship and belonging; “Engagement with YouTube content as well as interaction with other users is an important means of fulfilling the social interaction need” (Khan, 2017. p.243). As previously discussed, and supported with respondent data, commenting is not as common as other scholarship may make it appear. As an example of this, British Vlogger Zoella’s most popular video (Chopping Off My Hair, 2015) has just over 6.4 million views but only 1274 comments (as of summer, 2020), totalling roughly 0.02% of the total viewers that interact via comments.

Commenting, however, is not the sole source of social interaction on YouTube. The like and dislike function on videos and comments themselves allows the viewer to offer their opinion without identifying themselves. This was also noticed in the interview with Research Participant Four;

I have liked to video before. I suppose that's like anonymous I don't really want people see me commenting on videos. (RP4, 2019)

Liking and disliking allows the creator to understand their audience’s preference of video type on their channel in a quantitative way; “The motive of social interaction by users was logically reflected in almost all participatory acts (like, dislike, comment, and upload)” (Khan, 2017. p. 243). For those who refrain from commenting, sharing content is also a way of interacting with the community and this can fulfil the same physiological needs; “the reasons that cause the users to distribute the video material found on this platform relate to the need for interaction with other users, the desire to be involved in a fun activity but also to the need to spend time with close friends and family” (Buf and Ștefăniță, 2020, p. 77). This in turn supports the significant growth in YouTube consumption, which exemplifies the Two-step Flow Model of Communication (Lazarsfield and Katz, 1955).

5.5 Affective Needs

Another section of Katz, Haas and Gurevitch’s (1973) Uses and Gratification theory is *Affective Needs*. This category focuses on how SNSs such as YouTube gratify their users by providing pleasure through emotions and feelings. Rosenbusch, Evans and Zeelenberg (2019) explain how “a substantial part of everyday emotions are elicited through social media” (p. 1028).

These emotions will be analysed through the primary research gathered during this study whilst also applying secondary research and theory.

During the primary research conducted for this study many participants within the interview process discussed the connection they feel with the content they watch on YouTube and moreover the content creator. Research Participant One and Four stated they felt a relationship between themselves and their favourite content create despite them knowing they existed:

I mean most of the time because I have... like, it's so weird how you feel like a connection with someone you don't actually know. (RP1, 2019)

Yes I suppose, its weird cause I just said that it depends on the relationship you have with the YouTuber, but it's... like I have a relationship with them, but they don't even know I exist. So, it's kind of it's weird. (RP4, 2019)

Yeah. So I could say like I had this relationship where I feel their emotions but it's not like they even know who I am. I'm just like a number to them. So, I dunno, it's really weird. I just feel like it's something that's I've built up over time. If you've watched it for a long time, you... I feel like I know them, so I feel like if anything goes, it's like a friend, like I know everything about them, or as much as they let me see, so when they feel emotions I'm like 'oh I know how hard they tried for a baby and how long they've been waiting for' and so I get really upset with them like when they lost their baby. (RP4, 2019)

This is known as a para-social relationship that occurs between the consumer and the creator. This relationship starts to develop when any user acquires a relationship towards a character or person they only know from the media (Reinecke and Oliver, 2016, p. 132). A para-social relationship is whereby a fan, subscriber, user or follower “attempts to live vicariously, through the perceived lives of the famous” (Jenson, 1992, p. 17) and a bond is formed. Reinecke and Oliver (2016) illustrate this by identifying that “users intuitively feel personally addressed by the other (although they are not as the other addresses a mass audience), and they experience the seemingly social encounter as reciprocal (although it is not because it is one-sided)” (p. 132).

It is important to understand “how the concepts of parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships are transferable to new phenomena emerging through innovations in media technology” (Rihl and Wegener, 2017, p. 554) and the impact this has on its users. Therefore, the emotions transferred to users from their consumption of content on YouTube can be categorised in two ways. Rosenbusch, Evans and Zeelenberg (2019) categorise these as “situational emotion transfer from Person A to Person B (most frequently labeled “emotional contagion”) and general similarity between Person A and Person B (e.g., “flocking together” or homophily of emotionally similar people)” (p. 1028).

Research Participant Four demonstrated they experience situation emotional transfer when watching YouTube:

So, I could say like I had this relationship where I feel their emotions... so, when they feel emotions... I get really upset with them (RP4, 2019)

Whereas other participant within the study exhibited more homophily of emotionally similar people whereby the individual in the content displays content of a funny nature and the audience member experiences the same emotion:

Erm...if they're like funny and their content like grabs you. So, like if I find and watch a video and I'm not interested in the first minute or two I'm just like yeah no, not watching it, move on. But if it's funny and I am interested then I will continue watching it. (RP3, 2019)

[I] want to watch them because obviously they're funny (RP2, 2019)

From a sociological perspective, theory surrounding emotion, social interaction and individuality is comprehensive, arguing that emotion is integral to sociological needs. Shilling (2002) argues that "social emotions allow the soul to express itself by providing a foundation for personality to [reach] development" (p. 22) and in terms of YouTube's contribution towards this, Shilling notes that "forms arise from and allow the expression of life's vital contents" (p. 22). These platforms combine expressionism with emotion and allow the user room for emotional growth.

In addition to this, YouTube can be considered in this instance to have an emotional effect on the user; a vital factor of social emotion "involves the location of emotions, and the extent to which they possess an independent causal significance or are usually stimulated by other social factors" (p. 25).

The facilitation of emotional needs through the SNS YouTube provides its users with satisfaction of their psychological needs. Maslow (1954) discusses in his research how human seek certain needs in their everyday life and developed his '*Hierarchy of Needs*'. These psychological needs help users build intimate relationship building on their belongingness and love needs with content creators online and thus provide the fulfilment giving the user emotional gratification.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that this can also cause an opposing emotional feeling when content creates deprive their users of their content on SNSs. Research Participant Three explains how they can sometimes feel a negative emotion if they cannot consume content when they are expecting it:

It like... especially if it's like a story or something, like you could do like... like... a house tour, like renovations and this and then they just don't the show the final product, I would get a bit annoyed. (RP3, 2019)

Therefore, it is important the content creators on SNSs establish a form of schedule to their audience in order to establish their expectations and prevent negative emotions from their consumers.

5.6 Tension Release Needs

Within their research study Papacharissi and Rubin in 2000, found a correlation between the use of the Internet and the desire for individual users of the Internet to escape from their own personal issues and worries. Through the analysis of my own desire to consume content on YouTube it is evident that the need to escape from the real world is a high motive for my consumption over the last eight years of being an active user of this site.

Katz and Foulkes (1962) also explored the reasons as to why people use mass media and explore the idea that "they use it for escape. People are deprived and alienated... and so they

turn to the dreamlike world of the mass media for substitute gratifications” (p. 379). This dream like world provides them with a diversion from any problems the user is currently experiencing and relax releasing the tensions of everyday life. Research Participant Two detailed how they consume YouTube content to relax and take a break:

I just need some time to like relax then sure videos most probably on YouTube would be lasting 10 minutes, so it's quite a good time frame for me to like have a break. (RP2, 2019)

I feel like it's more... more like a relaxation for me just to sit back and just it's like watching a movie... It's just kind of relaxing in a way as well and it's kind of like... it's kind of like a mood, to make your mood a lot more chill (RP2, 2019)

The research participant highlights how they indulge in YouTube content in order to help relax and chill, sitting back from everyday life. This helps gratify their need for relaxation and tension release from reality. Hall-Phillips et al., (2016) explains how “Consumers utilize social media to engage with social ventures, permitting them to escape into a virtual community” (p.487). The fulfilment of this need and the positive emotions that YouTube content give its user reinforce them to return to the site in order to reciprocate this feeling again when they feel in a similar situation.

Another form of tension release is that of escapism. The consumption of the Internet and furthermore content on SNSs like YouTube allow users to become immersed in the online virtual world through the Internet and this escapism relieves them from their daily boredom and troubles (Close and Kukar-Kinney, 2010, p .17). Within the Interview in the primary research gathering process two participants discussed how they use YouTube content to escape from their own lives in order to like viciously through their chosen content creator:

I watched the most is a family of vloggers and I don't have a family. I mean they have four kids six dogs. I don't have four kids and six dogs but they're still my favourite people to watch I suppose it's... I suppose it's more like, it doesn't reflect my lifestyle but that's maybe what I maybe aspire my lifestyle to be like that because they have this sort of glamorized life and they have a big house,

what looks like a perfect family and everything, there is nothing wrong with any of them. (RP4, 2019)

And also, like I like to see their lives and see how different, where they've got in their life like with their YouTube platform and see how the other life lives. (RP3, 2019)

This reinforces how the participants use YouTube to escapes from their everyday life indulging in a more glamorised life escaping their own. Longeway (1990) explains how “entertainment's essential purpose is to draw us away from our everyday troubles, and, sometimes, to help us to fantasize ourselves as better, more important, and better off than we really are. Indulgence in such entertainment helps us avoid, temporarily, unpleasant truths that we must live with, and it is this escape from unpleasant reality that gives us the terms "escapist" and "escapism"” (p. 1). This is highlighted by Research Participant Four who explains how they consume content of a life they aspire.

Users will continue to consume content that will “enable [a] distraction from problems” (Young, Kuss, Griffiths and Howard, 2017, p.16) escaping undesirable currently societal situations. With users continuously wanting to seek out escapism from everyday life the need for the gratification of this will be sought by SNSs like YouTube furthermore contributing to its popularity and growth in society.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter it is evident the that users of the SNS YouTube hold a lot importance in the growth and popularity of site. Ultimately with the users consuming the content withing this site, the site would seize to exist. It is the users that underpin the financial gains of the site through viewership and active participate in the likes of commenting, liking and sharing. YouTube has created an environment that “allows users to interact with the site in multiple ways, whereby participation on the site takes a deeper meaning” (Khan, 2017, p. 236) and fundamental hold a lot of control.

With the application of Katz, Haas and Gurevitch's (1973) five key categories of Uses and Gratifications it is evident to see how YouTube meets its a wide usership requirements thus giving the site popularity within society. User's *Integrated Needs* are fulfilled with YouTube

content providing personal credibility and the validity of self through the comparison of YouTubers. The *Cognitive Needs* of YouTube users are met through the large data base of reviews and DIYs that provide users with informative content growth their understanding and knowledge. The huge community of users and fan bases that YouTube has provided its users allows for the satisfaction of *Social Integrated Needs* with YouTube's feature of commenting and liking allowing the facilitation of social interaction. The magnitude of YouTube content allows users to find content that meets their *Affective Needs* providing them with optimistic emotional stimulation reinforcing a positive correction between YouTube content and emotional satisfaction. Finally, *Tension Needs* are met by allowing escapism through the SNS allowing negative feelings and stress to be diminished furthermore promote the positive correction between a user and YouTube.

Although Katz, Haas and Gurevitch's (1973) five key categories of Uses and Gratifications were applied to the data found within this study, it is also key to discuss how this theory could be advanced and the limitations it provides. The Uses and Gratification theory sees audience members actively seeking out gratification from the media they consume, however this is not always the case and not as divides as first explained. From personal consumption habits, it is evident that the gratification often interlink and merge without the users actively seeking to do so. It may be that a user is watching a YouTube video to gratify their emotion needs however, also digest informative material and release tension needs.

Furthermore, the Uses and Gratification theory does not discuss any negative interaction or emotion that a user may receive when consuming media. Research participants discuss in their interview that they can feel "sad" (RP1, 2019) and "upset" (RP4, 2019) when consuming content on YouTube. From a personal ethnographic approach, it is also evident in the comment section of YouTube, that some users visit the side in order to actively criticise the content or creator. This theory does not discuss these negative emotions and gratification that some users seek to experience.

Untimely, without the satisfaction of the audience's user and gratification they would seek to receive this fulfilment in other SNSs diminishing the popularity of YouTube. With YouTube facilitating the many needs of a user through its continuously growing content and also its database of pre-existing content, it can withhold its importance within society thus ensuring its popularity and growth.

Conclusion

Ultimately, in order to effectively summarise the catalysts of the YouTube phenomenon, it is fundamental to consider that “YouTube is not merely an archive of moving images. It is much more than a fast-growing collection of millions of home-made videos. It is an intense emotional experience” (Strangelove, 2010, p. 4). In the fifteen years since its inception, YouTube has fulfilled a variety of needs for society and it remains imperative to continue to follow its development; “understanding content popularity growth on the Internet is of great relevance to a broad range of services, from technological, economic and social perspectives” (Figueiredo, Benevenuto and Almeida, 2011, p. 745). The investigation into this growth was categorised for the purposes of clarity within this study into the four chapters, *Technological Developments, YouTube and Its Content, Content Creators and YouTube Users*. This theoretical framework for thesis has been based upon presenting the voices and experiences of the research participants and data found. As previously summarised, these topics were devised from themes that became apparent after conducting primary qualitative and quantitative research. Theoretical scholarship has been applied in support of their validity.

Whilst there are some who would argue that YouTube displays the reproduction of similar content, “mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 14) and it is necessary to record such change. This “mechanical reproduction of art” rebukes the concept of democracy and creativity of the users and portrays YouTube as a commercial machine as opposed to a platform for free speech; “the algorithms these platforms depend on deliberately amplify the type of content that keeps users engaged” (Anti-Defamation League, 2019).

Chapter Two, Technology, begins with providing an overview of YouTube’s history, following revolutionary Internet progress, and how social networking sites have allowed the integration of user generated content. This chapter brings to light that the technological development of the Web 2.0, SNSs and content creators providing UGC, are interchangeable and completely dependent on each other (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 262). The latter three topics discussed in the technology chapter, quality, access and features, were derived from themes within the primary research specifically. For example, “better broadband Internet speeds and growing mobile device use have also fuelled higher video consumption” (Khan, 2017, p. 236) and roughly 91% of questionnaire respondents answered that they watched YouTube from their smart phones

(see figure 4C). Finally, YouTube in itself has developed integrated features including their algorithm for suggested content that has allowed an easier journey throughout the site for the user; YouTube “is easy to use and understand by everyone, independent of culture, language, age, and so forth” (Crick, 2016. p.286). Suggested content was discussed by the participants as having prompted them to continue their watching on the site.

Following this, Chapter Three, which focuses on the content of YouTube specifically, explains the differentiation between YouTube and traditional media forms as “YouTube[‘s] content is diverse and global” (Khan, 2017, p, 236). Whilst YouTube is similar to television in the form of enabling one-way relationships, it is in the variety of its content that the audience can find its USP (unique selling proposition). Whilst television offers scheduled fictional and non-fictional content, divided by advertisements and sponsorships, YouTube “allows videos in various genres, not only limited to music but also film trailers, video game play, sports, ability, user content, and program recording” (Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2017, p. 364). In order to permit a revenue stream for content creators, YouTube also enables advertisements before, during and around the channel’s videos, however YouTube offers “smooth links between content and commercials” (Kim, 2012, p. 61) compared to traditional media formats. It is in the interviews that respondents explained not being aggravated by watching advertisements on YouTube as it is a way for them to support their favourite creators.

Following this evidence of user support, the next chapter, Content Creators, dissects the most frequently discussed personality traits of popular YouTubers and how these affect the popularity of YouTube as a whole. Largely, individuals within the research were drawn to certain individuals because of their ordinariness and authenticity however the most prominent traits resulted in being trust, assets, talent and personality;

“The formal content of vlogs –the verbal sharing of the ‘authentic’ self– may well, however, appear divorced from notions of labour, talent and skill, at least as these concepts are traditionally understood. Rather, it is in their likeable, relatable, often slightly comedic personalities, and in their willingness to share personal information, that the commercial appeal of vloggers rests” (Lovelock, 2016, p. 91)

The notion of YouTuber's popularity due to their assets primarily focuses on reviewing products made available to them due to their status as a YouTuber (via public relations boxes). The differentiation between a wealthy individual on YouTube and a YouTuber who has gained wealth due to their popularity is made evident in the respondent interviews, discussed in more detail within this chapter. Research Participant One discussed the growth in opportunities that those reviewing content have available to them and how this enables vicarious viewership. This is contrasted to the discussion of wealthy YouTuber's such as Jeffree Star, who's luxurious lifestyle limits the relatability with the user, in the eyes of the participants.

Due to the diversity in content previously discussed, after analysis of the primary research, the participants depicted different reasons why they consume YouTuber's content. Therefore, Uses and Gratifications theory was applied during Chapter Five, Users, to determine how Katz's (1973) five distinguished groups (Integrated, Cognitive, Social, Affective and Tension Release needs) conform to the discussion of the participants in their interviews. Furthermore, "UG literature states that individuals contrast in their media use as they vary in their requirements for media utilization" (Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2017, p. 366) and so it was important to cover all five of these factors. Ultimately, the most influential categories for the participants of the interviews were based on emotion, tension release and entertainment.

It's just kind of relaxing in a way as well and it's kind of like... it's kind of like a mood, to make your mood a lot more chill. (RP2, 2019)

Dolan et al. (2015) summarise McQuail (1983) by stating that "the value of entertaining media is embedded in its ability to fulfil user needs for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and emotional release" (p. 263). The need for these uses in the day to day lives of the users and their availability within YouTube's content correlates with the platform's increased popularity.

Initial conclusions of the questionnaire summarised that without the technological advances in the 21st century, YouTube would not exist as we know it. However, after further analysis of the questionnaire and application of the rich qualitative data from the interviews, it is evident that the respondent's connection to the content creators is what creates their lasting viewership on YouTube. Specifically, all four interviewees referenced specific YouTube personalities in their responses to questions that did not specifically call for them. These include Zoella, Cody

Ko, Shane Dawson, Mia Maples, Alfie Deyes and SacconeJolys. The participants referred to the content as relatable to them and their lifestyles and that they enjoyed the series available to them, through the pleasure of voyeurism.

In summary, whilst the scholarship surrounding YouTube and its growth is significantly less comprehensive than that of traditional media forms, the platform's dominance within society is evident; "in less than 10 years, YouTube has become the world's largest free repository of audio and video material and provides the largest free searchable database and historical record of human activity in perhaps the past 100 years" (Crick, 2016, p. xii). The foundation of this thesis aimed to understand the reasoning behind the growth of YouTube, "alongside attempting to understand [the researcher's] consumption habits" (see page 8). Each chapter in this study has acted as a contributing factor towards YouTube's development and each could not thrive without the other. Whilst the growth in technology allows the existence of YouTube as a platform, this study has identified that without the content creators, their content and the users themselves, the SNS would not have excelled as it has.

Whilst this study has succeeded in contributing to the scholarship of YouTube's development in an ethical manner, continuation of "media analysis is particularly important when the forms and technological basis of media outputs are changing fast" (Couldry, 2012, p. x). Future research within this topic could see great benefit from a netnographic study, focusing on the content from participating users in comment sections. A netnography is used to "investigate consumer behavior of culture and communities present on the internet" (Kozinets, 1998, p. 366) and this could only benefit the spectrum of information surrounding YouTube's development. As this research take a close reading into the aspects of YouTube's growth, future studies could take this research wider and investigate the influence this growth has on society.

"The technology for [the] internet will continue to develop for many years" (Howard, 2005, p. 318) and it is essential to monitor, interpret and analyse consumption habits to understand the modern user. Whilst future trends are unpredictable, "YouTube's social and technological influences, both domestically and internationally, present fertile research, teaching, and learning opportunities" (Crick, 2016, p. 286). With YouTube's development having catalysed so vastly in only fifteen years, it is possible to assume that this growth will only continue to prosper.

Fundamentally, it is the accessibility of YouTube and its users that has allowed for this study to take place. The analysis within this investigation has provided statistical quantitative data as well as rich qualitative data with the application of pre-existing theory. A mixed-method approach has cultivated comprehensive support for the research question at hand. This has ultimately contributed to the scholastic understanding of the digital media platform and its growth in its entirety.

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Appendix

Figure 1:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Stacie Killgallon.

Background This research aims to gather information, understanding and a discussion on how YouTuber's voices have grown over the upcoming years and how much influence they hold over society. The research is also expected to reveal the reasoning as to why YouTubers produce their content but also why the audience consumes this content.

What will you be required to do? Participants in this study will be required to answer questions to the best of their knowledge and ability truthfully.

To participate in this research, you must: Be over the age of sixteen years old.

Procedures: Participants will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire privately, either online or on paper, to the best of their knowledge and ability truthfully.

Feedback: If participants wish to receive the results formulated from this research they can contact the researcher via email s.killgallon386@canterbury.ac.uk. All participants have the right to withdraw themselves or their results during any period of the research.

Confidentiality: All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Stacie Killgallon, Tim Long (first supervisor), Shane Blackman (second supervisor) and examiners. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and erased after five years.

Dissemination of results: Results from this research will be discussed in a Masters by Research thesis.

Deciding whether to participate: If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions? Please contact Stacie Killgallon on s.killgallon386@canterbury.ac.uk or Stacie Killgallon, Graduate School, Masters by Research, Media, Art and Design, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU or Tim Long via Tim.long@canterbury.ac.uk or Tim Long, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU.

Figure 2:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The social network surge: an investigation on the catalysts of YouTube and its growth

Name of Researcher: Stacie Killgallon

Contact details: s.killgallon386@canterbury.ac.uk or tim.long@canterbury.ac.uk

Please tick below to confirm you understand and agree to participate in this study:

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. (1)
 - 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. (2)
 - 3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential (3)
 - 4. I agree to take part in the above study. (4)
-

Figure 3:

Questionnaire

Q1 Do you watch YouTube?

Yes

No

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q2 In a typical day about how many hours do you spend on YouTube?

Q3 Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

Q4 What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

_____ Lifestyle

_____ Gaming

_____ Vlogs

_____ Beauty

_____ DIY

_____ Comedy

_____ Music

Q5 Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?

Yes

No

Q6 Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?

Yes

No

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q6.B Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

Q7 Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?

Yes

No

I do not know what a YouTuber is

Skip To: Q11 If answer is I do not know what a YouTuber is

Q8 Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?

Yes

No

Q8.B Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

Q9 Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?

Yes

No

Q10 Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: Q 11 if answer is No

Q10.B What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

Q11 Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?

- _____ Technological Developments
 - _____ Personalities on YouTube
 - _____ Content on YouTube
 - _____ Accessibility to the Internet
 - _____ Culture and Environment
 - _____ Entertainment and Pleasure
-

Q12 Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube's popularity in the last 5 years

_____ Technological advances

_____ YouTube personalities (YouTubers)

_____ Content on YouTube

Q13 What gender do you identify with?

Male

Female

Q14 What age category do you fall into?

16 to 24

25 to 3

35 to 44

45 to 54

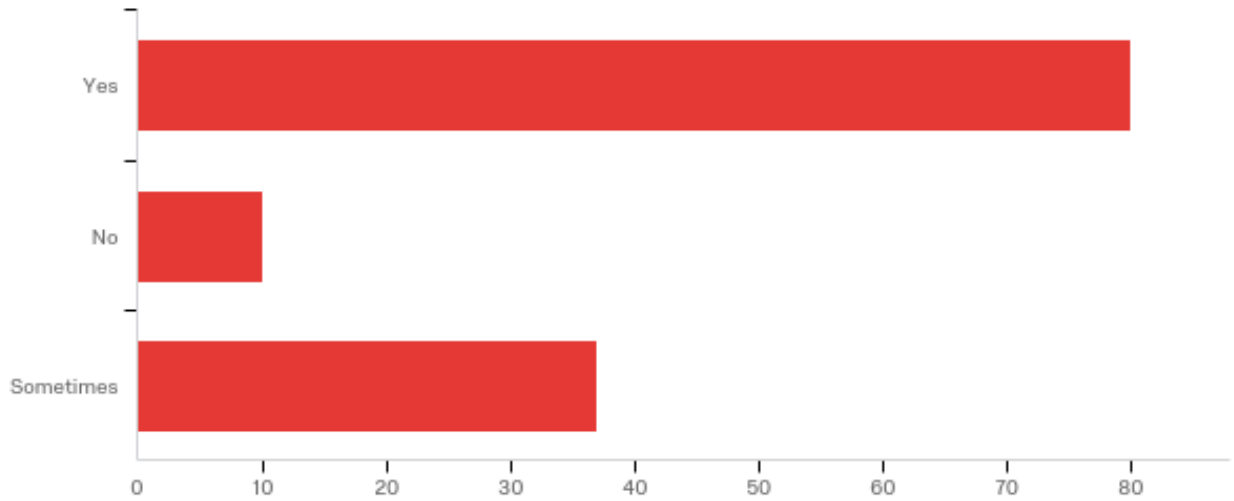
55 to 64

65 or older

Figure 4A:

Questionnaire Results

Q1 - Do you watch YouTube?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you watch YouTube?	1.00	3.00	1.66	0.90	0.81	127

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	62.99%	80
2	No	7.87%	10
3	Sometimes	29.13%	37
	Total	100%	127

Figure 4B:

Questionnaire Results

Q2 - In a typical day about how many hours do spend on YouTube?

1hr
1hr
0
1 hour
2-3
30 minutes
1
15minutes
Under an hour
2
3
1
3
10 minutes
5mins
1
2
Half
3
10 minutes here or there
1
4-5 hours
1
30mins
1 hour
1
1 hour

2 hours

30 mins

0.25

0.1

1-2

10 mins

1-2

0.3

3

1

2 hours

4

1-2

2

1

1

1 hour

3 hours

Half an hour

0.10

0-1

2

8

1

1

0.3

1

2

1 or 2

1 to 3 hrs

Less than 1

1

1

2

1

4

1

2

2/3

2 hours per week

2 hours

Less than an hour

1

4

0.5

0.5

2

Less than 1

0.5

1 or less

.5

1

10 minutes

1 hour

10mins

Hour

0

Less than 1

3

1

15 mins

1 hour tops, not every day

1 hour

Ten minutes

2-3

0.5

0

0

1 hour

1

30-60 minutes

3-4

None

0.5

1

1

0.5

0.25

45 minutes per week

4

1

1

1 hour

1

1

15 mins

Less than 1

0.5

1

2-4

Figure 4C:

Questionnaire Results

Q3 - Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

Mobile phone
I phone
Phone, tv, laptop
Laptop, mobile phone
iPhone tv computer
Laptop and phone
Phone and computer
Phone and laptop
Phone or laptop
iPad Pro andriod phone
iPhone, tablet, pc
phone and laptop
PS4, phone and laptop
iPhone iPad
Computer, phone
2
Phone, laptop
PS4, pc
Apple Tv, Sky, Mobile, Laptop
PC, iPad, laptop
Ipad
Mobile phone
Mobile
Phone, MacBook
iPhone
Mobile, Laptop and Ipad
Phone - iPhone, laptop, chrome cast to TV

PC and mobile phone
Computer, Laptop, Ipad, Iphone
iPad, PC
laptop
Phone, computer
Phone, laptop
Phone, laptop
Laptop
Phone, laptop.
Mobile Phone, iPad, Laptop
Phone & laptop
iPad, phone and xbox
Phone and computer
Computer, sometimes phone
Iphone
Smart phone, Playstation 4.
Smart TV, laptop, iPhone, Xbox one.
TV, tablet, mobile phone
Phone, laptop
Mobile, tablet
Phone, laptop
Phone, laptop
Phone & PC
iPhone ipad
Ipad iphone
iPad
Phone iPad
Mac
Phone, tablet, laptop
Mobile phone tv

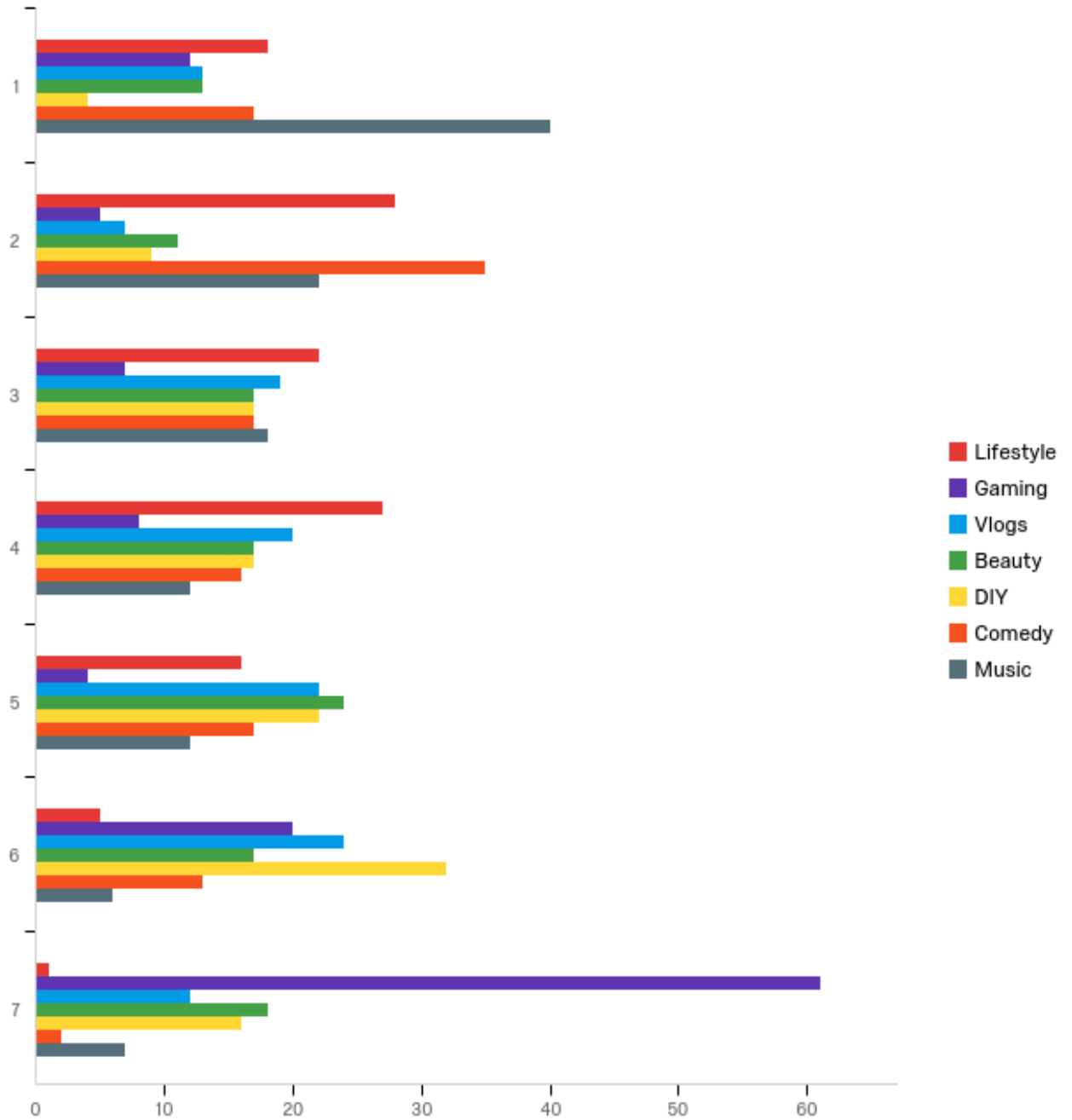
iPhone
Phone, tablet, tv
iPhone and ipad
iPad, phone
Phone
iPhone, PS4
Mobile, tablet, tv
Tablet and phone
iPad/phone/tv
Tv, phone, tablet
Ipad smartphone laptop
Mobile, tv, laptop
iPhone, laptop
Computer. Tv. Phone
Mobile, tablet
Kindle
Phone, TV, Laptop
iPhone ipad
Computer, phone
Laptop, phone
Phone, laptop, xbox (with tv)
Android phone, ipad, chromecast
Phone
Phone and laptop
Phone
I phone
My phone
Phone, iPad
Smart phone
Phone & tablet

Phone, laptop
Laptop, phone
iPhone, smart tv, interactive whiteboard at school
Laptop phone
Phone, Xbox One, Playstation 4, PC
iPhone
Ipad
Smartphone (Samsung), Macbook
Mobile, iPad, laptop
Mobile phone, blue ray dvd, laptop, work pc
Smart Television, iPhone
iPhone
iPhone
Phone
iPhone, smart tv, PlayStation
Phone tablet tv
Phone, Laptop
Phone, tv,laptop
Mobile phone
Phone, computer
Iphone
Laptop, iPhone
Phone / laptop
Laptop, phone
Phone, laptop, ipad
Phone
iPhone, laptop
iPhone
iPad and phone
Phone, Computer, Amazon Fire Stick via TV

Figure 4D:

Questionnaire Results

Q4 - What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

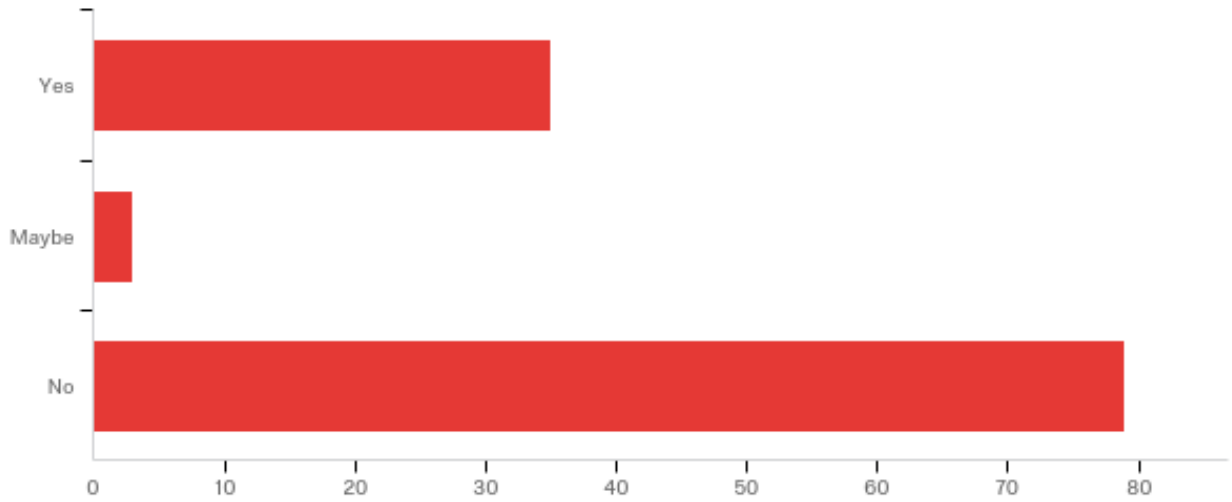


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Lifestyle	1.00	7.00	3.12	1.46	2.14	117
2	Gaming	1.00	7.00	5.49	2.09	4.35	117
3	Vlogs	1.00	7.00	4.29	1.80	3.25	117
4	Beauty	1.00	7.00	4.29	1.90	3.61	117
5	DIY	1.00	7.00	4.74	1.65	2.72	117
6	Comedy	1.00	7.00	3.24	1.68	2.81	117
7	Music	1.00	7.00	2.83	1.86	3.46	117

Figure 4E:

Questionnaire Results

Q5 - Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?



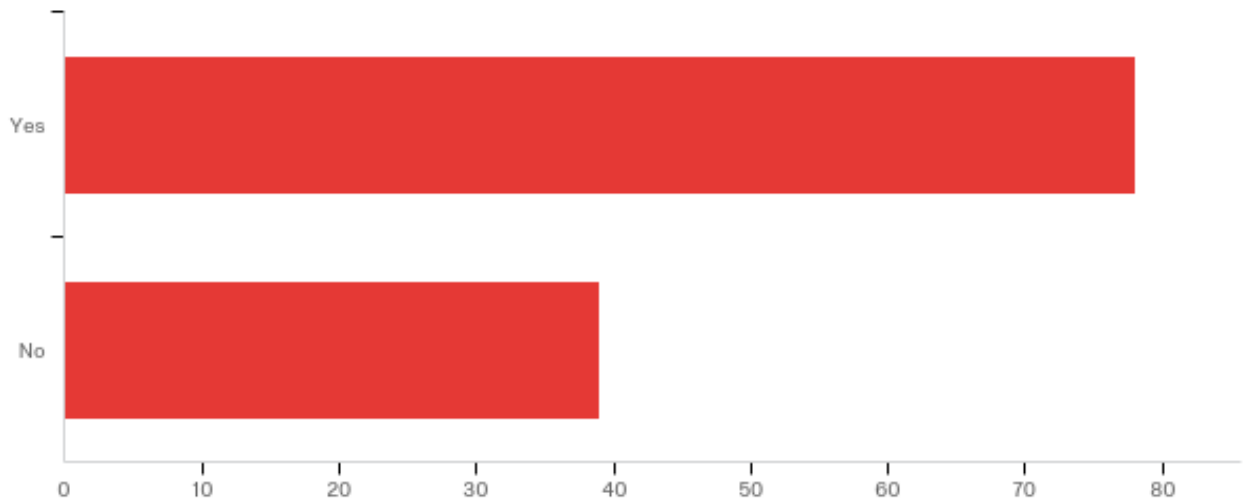
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?	1.00	3.00	2.38	0.91	0.83	117

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	29.91%	35
2	Maybe	2.56%	3
3	No	67.52%	79
	Total	100%	117

Figure 4F:

Questionnaire Results

Q6 - Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?	1.00	2.00	1.33	0.47	0.22	117

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	66.67%	78
2	No	33.33%	39
	Total	100%	117

Figure 4G:

Questionnaire Results

Q6.B - Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

Yes

Like there personality

interested in the topics they talk about

Because i find them interesting

I enjoy their content

If you particularly like the way a particular utuber does their make up then I like to follow their trend.

Comedy value

if i like their content

They make enjoyable content which is different

Interested to see what their next video will be about

Good content, fun personality

Because I like their content and their personalilty

Learning

If I like there channel, for example a beauty channel I want to see more styles and techniques they use.

When I like a video, I try to find more from the same person.

Because I like their content and am interested in what else they've done

I want to find out more about a single idea/subject

I like their content

If they're funny, I'll continue watching

I think they're good with camera, good with audiences, interactive, I like how they do makeup for example or blog their life

Because I think the put effort into their content and I enjoy watching what they put out in the platform

I find them interesting and like their content

I like the lifestyle videos and listen to the same music artists

Because it is funny

I enjoy their content or the video forms part of a series.

I only listen to music on youtube - some youtubers put up a whole album rather than one song

Enjoy their content consistently.

I enjoy the content and the style in which this particular YouTuber (jeffree star) does his videos. They make me laugh and are interesting.

Following updates

If i like the person i enjoy watching other similar videos they have made

They usually have related content with the same humour / style that I'm looking for at that time

Amusing content or user

The content is consistent and of the same verity

Like them

To be nosey

If I like the way they come across and what they have to say

Interesting

Because I like the style of video they create

Cause like their singing

Like the content they post

Like to see what people get up to on a day to day basis

Enjoy their content & style

Yes

If I enjoy one video they produce I usually enjoy their others

Enjoy the vlogs

I generally watch music videos so watch the same videos I like or other songs by the same artist

Helpful videos

Good tutorials

Good content, interested in their career

Like the content

Good content and it's what I'm interested in

Because their content interests me

Content

Because I enjoy the way they construct their content. Once I get drawn in to a specific type of video I like to see what's coming next.

Like the person

Comedy videos

I like the types of videos they make

Good videos of fornite

Because I relate to them

If I like their content, trust their info

All offer educational children's songs

Funny or interesting

I like their content

Enjoy the series

To catch up to date

Same music genre

The videos are informative, funny, sometimes thought provoking... they relax me

Comedians that entertain me, to discover music or to get puzzle game walkthroughs

Avoids differing views on same subject

Like their content

Enjoy the videos

I like their personality and their editing.

Interesting content

I like their content

Some videos are in parts

They provide good and reliable content

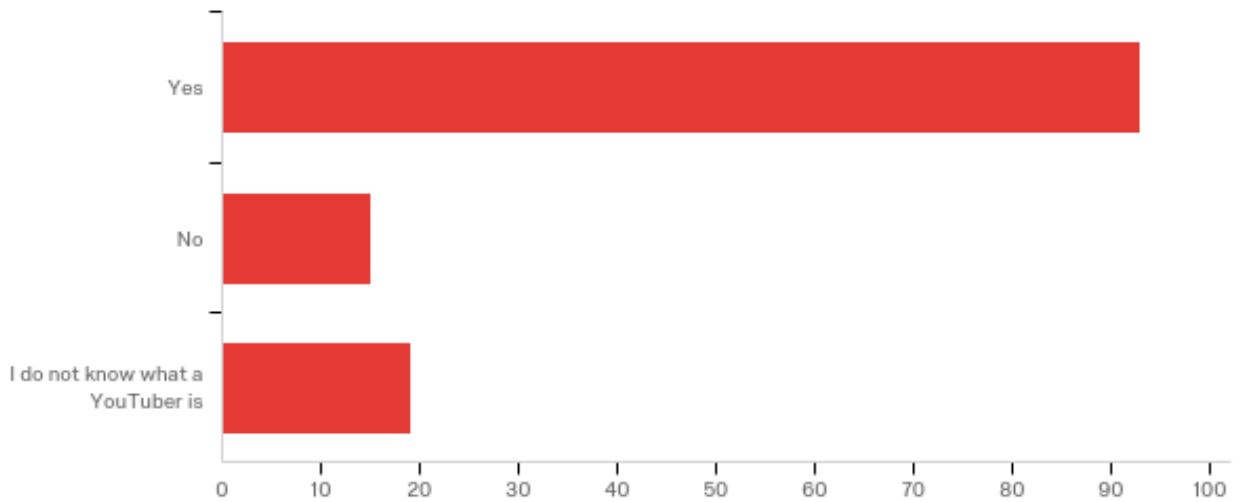
Interested in their content

Because I find certain ones that I like, i.e. they make me laugh or I trust their advice.
Sometimes it is if it has a lot of views.

Figure 4H:

Questionnaire Results

Q7 - Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?



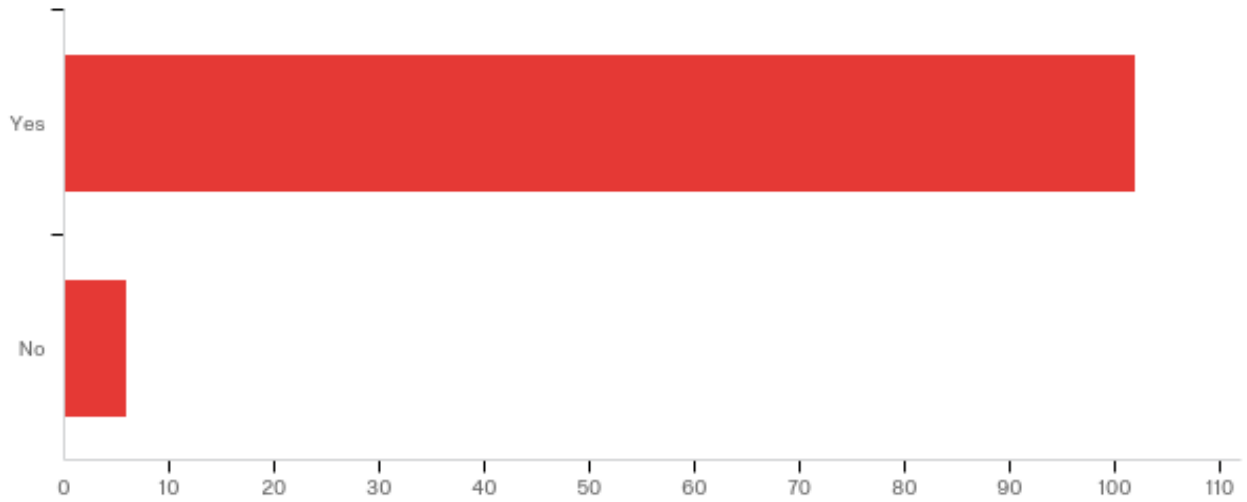
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?	1.00	3.00	1.42	0.74	0.54	127

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	73.23%	93
2	No	11.81%	15
3	I do not know what a YouTuber is	14.96%	19
	Total	100%	127

Figure 4I:

Questionnaire Results

Q8 - Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?	1.00	2.00	1.06	0.23	0.05	108

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	94.44%	102
2	No	5.56%	6
	Total	100%	108

Figure 4J:

Questionnaire Results

Q8.B - Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

They have a large following on young people in modern society

Followers and trend

Young children look up to them

I personally do not get influenced, but I know others can be.

Because they have a lot of people watching them

some have such a large audience they are able to impact and reach out to many people

Yes i think they can have a big impact on others

They are normal people using products and if they recommend them people are going to buy them. Especailly younger people think that it is cool to have the same stuff as you tubers or think the same things as you tubers

The amount of their followers give them their creadance.

Children are starting from a young age to watch YouTube. And now children want to grow up as youtubers rather than careers in the workplace.

because they are seen as 'celebrities' and this often affects young people and their choices

Their audience chooses to regularly watch their videos so they can create whatever they'd like and therefore can influence the videos in anyway they'd like

If you tune in to the same YouTubers regularly I feel you must agree with them therefore future comments they make could influence you

People watching them are likely to aspire to be like them.

People start to feel like they know the YouTuber, and almost want to be like them.

Cos some kids feel a need to copy youtubers

Because they have so many watchers who buy stuff they mention and their own products all the time

Not celebrities so who cares

Cause they influenced me to buy a guitar

Because f the demographics they attract

The way they look and the lifestyle they project

If they are doing well for themselves, look good have nice things you want that.

People tend to accept opinions easier when they are expressed by those they like and/or admire

Many YouTubers promote ideas/products/services so they encourage their viewers to think the same way or buy a product/service

People often watch them for advice

Musicians are especially influential these days

You can learn things from them like makeup or hairstyles or DIY tricks or you copy pranks etc, they especially are popular with children and teenager so

Because people buy stuff the mention

I feel that Youtubers have the opportunity to be more personal with their audience as the content they produced is mostly defined by them, therefore their audience interacts and relates to them more than they would with a regular celebrity.

People look up to them/want to be like them

Because they can be role models and people usually follow what their role models do.

Because there are so many voices saying different things it is difficult with the modern generation to get any one idea across without it being questioned constantly

I think they have a commercial influence, in promoting products or services via sponsorships. Also by their personal opinions and recommendations.

If watched by impressionable children, they can easily manipulate their views

They show illustrations of what the product does

People feel they are close to their favourite YouTubers and may feel influenced to behave a certain way or buy a certain thing based on that.

They definitely have an influence if they are popular. People copy lifestyle choices, fashion, food choice, what products to buy, what makeup to keep clear of etc

Because people can associate with them

I think they do influence people due to the number of people who buy products they recommend and products they have made etc. Also copying items of clothing they have bought, how they do hair and make up

I think there is always a level of influence depending on the audience in question. If i am easily influenced, i sometimes may believe everything i want to believe. If they find one youtuber they believe, they can be easily influenced. For me, im not easily influenced and take everything at face value so its not a straight yes or no! But i definitely think there is a lot of potential

They take up so many hours of our lives and address such a wide number of people, anyone can take what they're saying or doing and replicate that in their own lives wether it's positive or negative

Subscribers have some loyalty

Can attract them to brands, outlets and other forms of social media's for them to follow and engage in

People learn to YouTube has to say

People want to learn

People see some as role models, also they showcase things which can influence an audience to buy or do something

Can be bad for the younger society

Because their audience will listen to their opinions or act in similar ways to those they watch

Cause when they sing and are good you want to watch and listen to more

Kids can be easily influenced and idolise others via gaming videos

I believe they do

A lot of younger people look up to youtubers

you hear good opinions and see the product on

You're still your own person

People usually look up to their favourite influencers

Some

A lot of viewers of certain videos, especially younger viewers aspire to them and want to be like them.

Audience are likely to buy the products or do things the YouTuber has got or done.

People are always striving to follow the fashionable and be 'liked'. The influence of media, public trends, societal expectations etc is high in that and YouTube is a bigger player in that field and influence

Cause you they show you in real life how stuff works

Not sure

Reading comments on their videos you can see some people (especially younger) worship them.

Because they become relatable and their the viewer may feel like they like/agree with the same things

Because so many people watch and have access to their posts

Most of them started as normal people so it's relatable

It can encourage people to do things either right or wrong

D List celebrities in an artificial and sheepish world

Products they are talking about

Youtubers use 'click bait' to draw audiences in. They also use data of the users to engage with the interests of particular genders and age groups

They have a wide platform to express their views, which especially to a younger audience could reach impressionable people

Real people showing ordinary stuff

Want to be like them and try stuff they do so influence me to get stuff

I think youtubers influence their audience to buy things if they talk about how great something is

People who watch them listen to them and take into consideration of what they are saying

Make people want to play it more

Young people follow rather than think for them selves sometimes

I know young people watch you tube about all sorts, I know my grandkids like it.

Because people aspire the be like them

Just like other media celebrities, YouTubers are able to shape the culture that surrounds then

Have a lot of followers

I think they influence younger generations as they're growing up seeing being a YouTuber as a career and something they can aspire to be and potentially an way to make money

They're basically minor celebrities, people trust them and their views

I use YouTube for children's educational videos and songs so I don't feel that the youtuber themselves necessarily influences me or the children as an audience, perhaps the content does

Their audience is normally young so easily to influence

Cause YouTube is a media outlet like any other

I hear it from the students I teach - new beauty trends etc.

They manage to directly connect to people in a way mainstream TV doesnt allow. It feels more individual and personal

They may seem more relatable to people as more often than not they are just 'normal' people

Started as normal people so they are truthful

I think informative you tubers are an important influence as long as their message is positive. Young people are more likely to watch you tube than to pick up a news paper

Truthful about stuff as they have a lot of followers

They promote designs

Speak about relevant subjects that aren't often discussed on mainstream networks like tv

More so on younger viewers

Have lots of people expecting truth from them

An endorsement of a particular beauty product/way of doing make up for example, would influence where I spend my money or how I do my make up, and I know this is the case for several friends too

It really depends on the subject matter. If they build a feeling of trust in what they say, you can be influenced far easier and are 'bought in' to what they say, and vice versa.

Because i feel if a YouTuber is seen buying and advertising experience items thats can influencetheor audience

They just do

They are relatable (mostly), so the audience feels they are on the same level. We feel like we know them (vloggers), and therefore feel like a friend is giving advice or recommending them something.

Because of the Video content - there is a perception that the person is talking straight to you. You can see you tubers and actually see products etc that they are using or making.

I have seen the reactions to you tubers being on tv programs where teenage fans are in the audience

I feel make up is influenced a lot more, and people buy because of reviews

They could inspire the individual with their videos

Due to reaching out to a large population base, they often can relate to the current generation

They act as role models to younger viewers

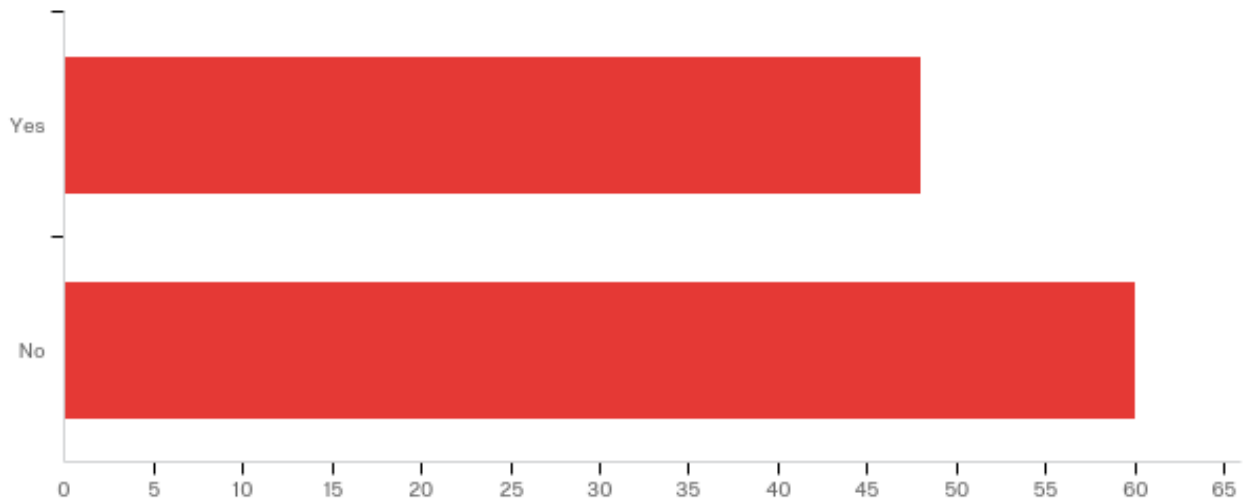
As it's easy to access and some are seen as celebrities

Because they have such a huge platform and so many viewers. I have personally bought things because a YouTuber has recommended them to me because I trust their opinions.

Figure 4K:

Questionnaire Results

Q9 - Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?



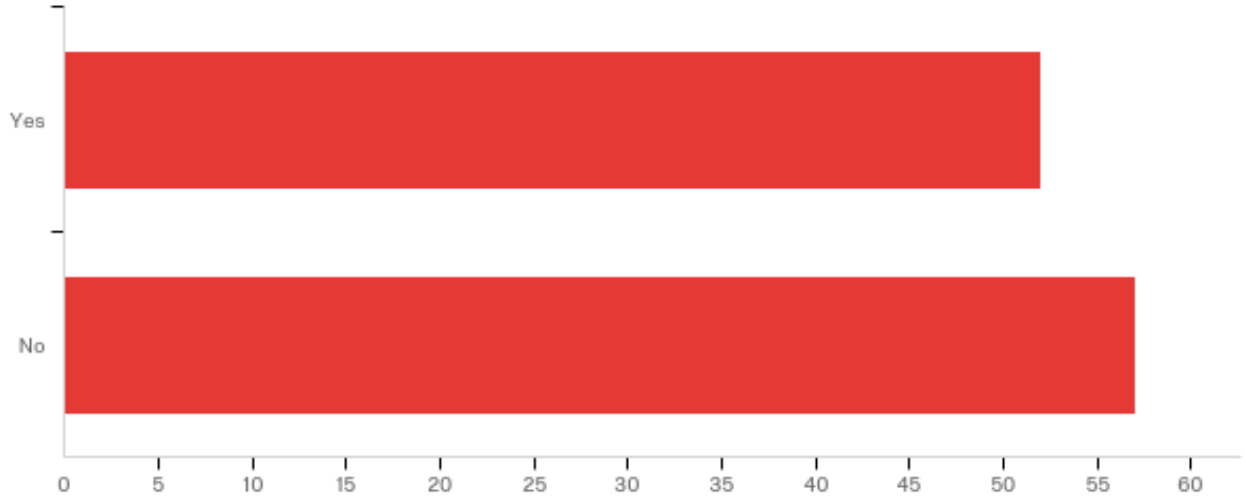
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?	1.00	2.00	1.56	0.50	0.25	108

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	44.44%	48
2	No	55.56%	60
	Total	100%	108

Figure 4L:

Questionnaire Results

Q10 - Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?	1.00	2.00	1.52	0.50	0.25	109

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	47.71%	52
2	No	52.29%	57
	Total	100%	109

Figure 4M:

Questionnaire Results

Q10.B - What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

Make up

A top - I liked the style

hoodie. Just because it has their name on the merchandise

I buy a lot of makeup off of the recommendations of you tubers, also if they do clothes or homeward hauls and I see stuff I like it takes the hassle of looking for stuff because it's usually linked in the video

makeup due to a discount code

A lush face scrub, because they had a good opinion of it being good for skin

A game they played as it looked good

Acoustic guitar

Looked good on the YouTuber!

I believed the YouTuber was an expert on the matter

Beauty products, just looked really nice design etc

Keyboard- so I could see its potential

My favourite Youtuber has her own stationary line and I found she put a lot of effort and work into it. I really liked the product she made and I wanted to support her so she can keep prospering and improving.

Make up, they advertised it well, it looked good on them

Games I have seen reviews of that I think I would enjoy.

Hair products

Purchased a video game after seeing a YouTuber play it and enjoy it.

I bought a mascara that was reviewed by Jeffree star, because his reviews are so in depth and honest it made me want to try it out. Turns out it's the best mascara I've ever owned and I haven't looked back.

Interested to see if the item would work. Exercise weights

Products of Zoella because my sister loves her and it was a gift for her

Just say it on channel and it was free download

keyboard, good to see in a video and see them review the technology in debth

Foundation, because they showed the foundation in more depth and trialed it etc

Because it looked like something I would like

A foundation because the you tuber did a review on it

Makeup, when you hear good opinions on a product you want to try it yourself

Something from Wish because it actually look like good prouducts, when I was worried it was a con

Makeup - because I trust their opinion over time

I've only purchased things that my daughter has seen from youtubers see likes and has a interest in

Make up. Because they gave it a really good review.

Helpful tips on how to use it

Beauty products, they gave good review

Make up, food, clothes, tech

Make up , they reviewed it and I could see how it worked before buying it

Exercise dvd

I have purchased beauty products that have been tried and recommended by YouTube Beaty vloggers. Because I trust their opinions and critiques

Make up

Makeup because they gave a good review of the product and make it look good in their videos

I enjoy dressing in a vintage way and the YouTubers I watch do reviews on certain vintage clothing companies or brands of make up, by them giving their recommendation, I feel that it's a tried and tested product. I am, however, dubious about paid promotions and sponsored videos, as they often feel false to me.

Makeup- I watched them use it and it convinced me the product was good

Make-up, I was looking for hints on how to do certain looks and so using the same products gave me the confidence to create that look. I knew the presenter knew her stuff and therefore would only use good products

Various makeup and because the results looked good on the person/people using it

Make up from particular brands (Morphe, Fenty... Anastasia Beverly Hills etc. Becuase I had seen an industry expert try it and recommend it as a good product.

Again, trust in what they're saying and in the product

I purchased technology that a youtuber was promising.

Make up- I feel that they would not promote something they didn't like as in some cases, their reputation is on the line. They wouldn't put their name to something that was rubbish.

Because you could see that the product worked

They reviewed it well

I bought some make up,

Make up and clothing brands, they gave honest & trustworthy reviews

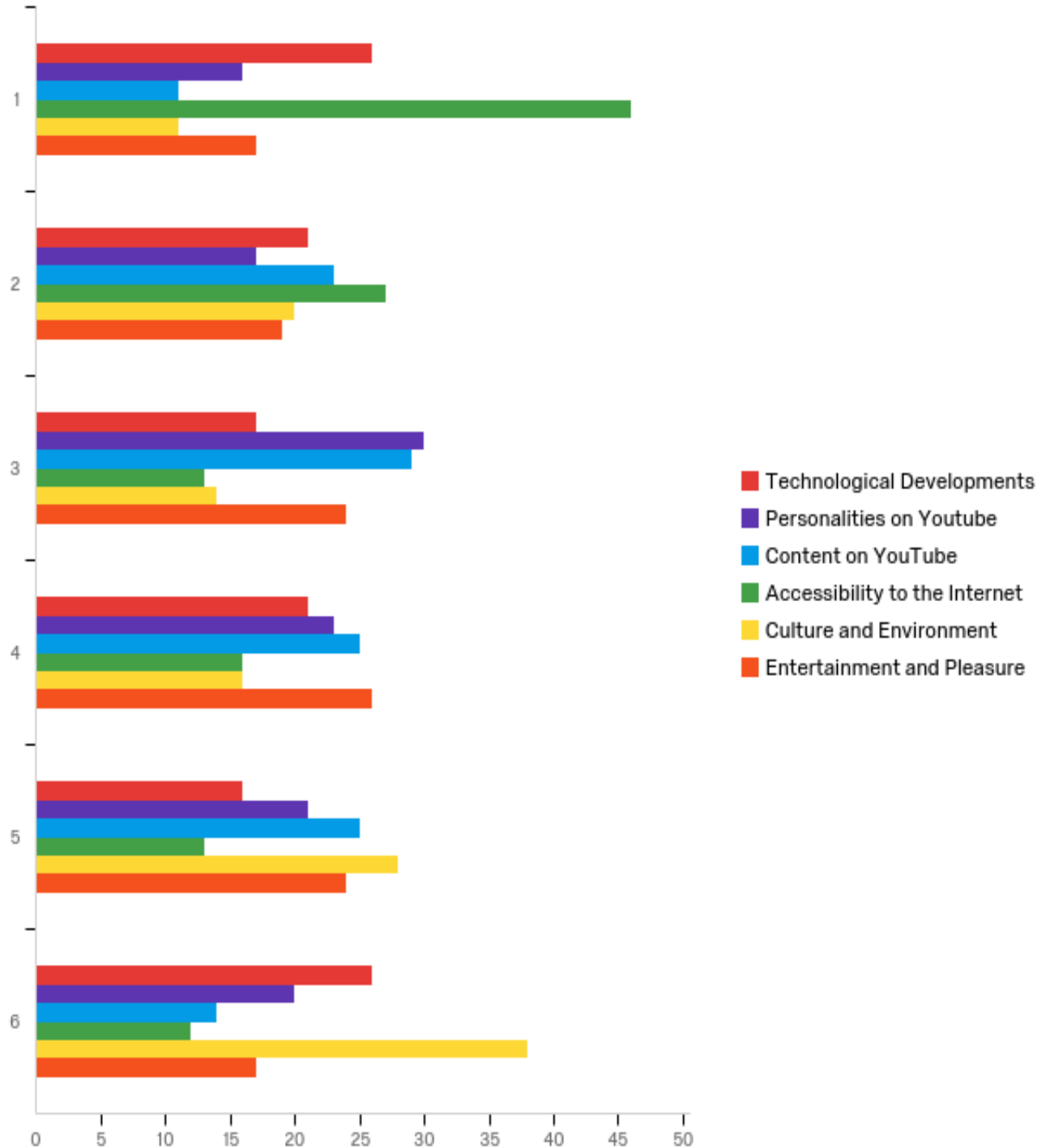
A mascara- it was highly recommended as a high street affordable product

Makeup, because they have so many views that they must be trustworthy

Figure 4N:

Questionnaire Results

Q11 - Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?



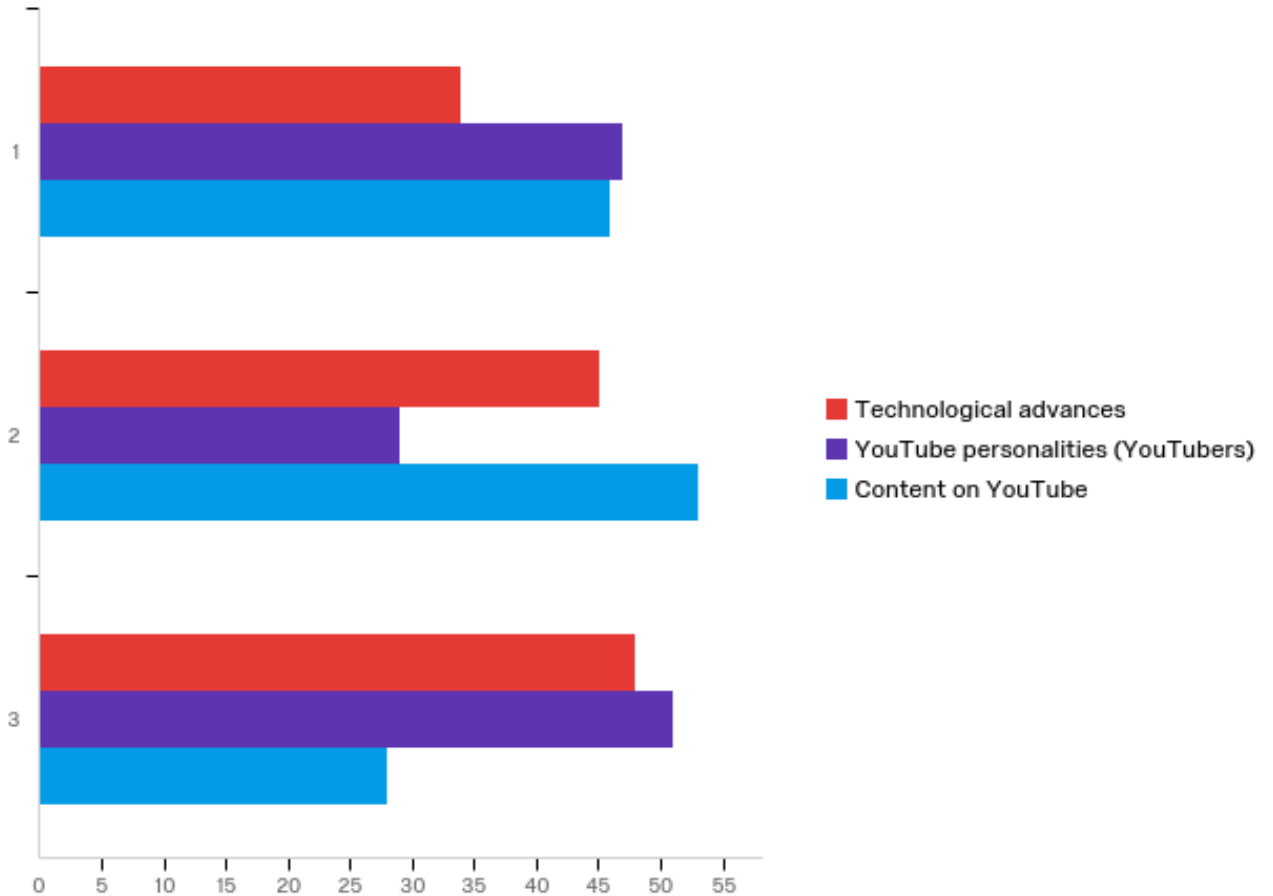
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Technological Developments	1.00	6.00	3.46	1.81	3.29	127
2	Personalities on YouTube	1.00	6.00	3.60	1.59	2.54	127
3	Content on YouTube	1.00	6.00	3.57	1.48	2.18	127
4	Accessibility to the Internet	1.00	6.00	2.68	1.72	2.94	127
5	Culture and Environment	1.00	6.00	4.13	1.71	2.92	127
6	Entertainment and Pleasure	1.00	6.00	3.57	1.59	2.53	127

#	Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total						
1	Technological Developments	20.47 %	26	16.54 %	21	13.39 %	17	16.54 %	21	12.60 %	16	20.47 %	26	127
2	Personalities on Youtube	12.60 %	16	13.39 %	17	23.62 %	30	18.11 %	23	16.54 %	21	15.75 %	20	127
3	Content on YouTube	8.66 %	11	18.11 %	23	22.83 %	29	19.69 %	25	19.69 %	25	11.02 %	14	127
4	Accessibility to the Internet	36.22 %	46	21.26 %	27	10.24 %	13	12.60 %	16	10.24 %	13	9.45 %	12	127
5	Culture and Environment	8.66 %	11	15.75 %	20	11.02 %	14	12.60 %	16	22.05 %	28	29.92 %	38	127
6	Entertainment and Pleasure	13.39 %	17	14.96 %	19	18.90 %	24	20.47 %	26	18.90 %	24	13.39 %	17	127

Figure 40:

Questionnaire Results

Q12 - Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube’s popularity in the last 5 years



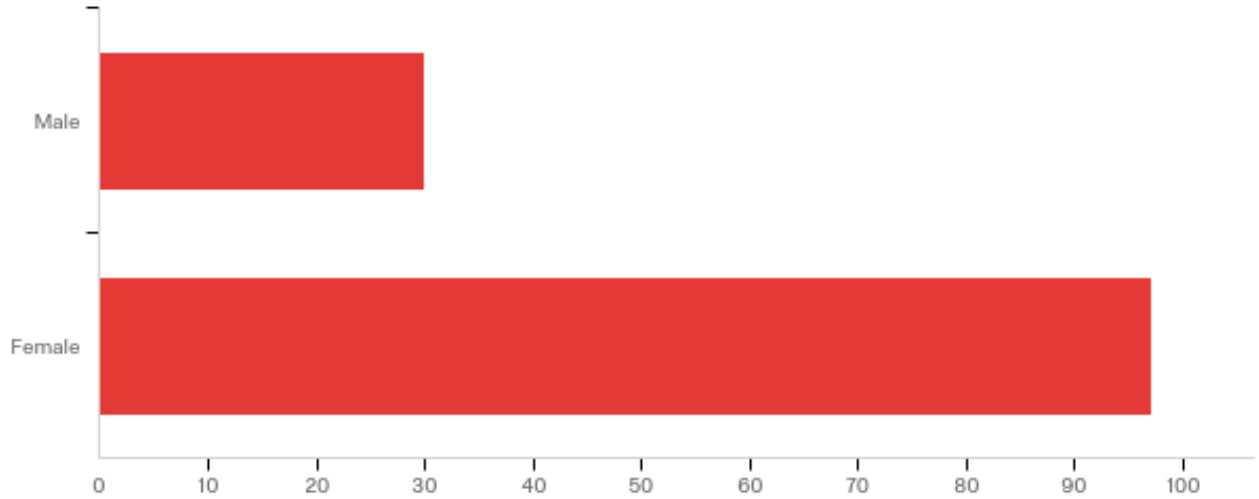
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Technological advances	1.00	3.00	2.11	0.80	0.63	127
2	YouTube personalities (YouTubers)	1.00	3.00	2.03	0.88	0.77	127
3	Content on YouTube	1.00	3.00	1.86	0.75	0.56	127

#	Question	1	2	3	Total			
1	Technological advances	26.77%	34	35.43%	45	37.80%	48	127
2	YouTube personalities (YouTubers)	37.01%	47	22.83%	29	40.16%	51	127
3	Content on YouTube	36.22%	46	41.73%	53	22.05%	28	127

Figure 4P:

Questionnaire Results

Q13 - What gender do you identify with?



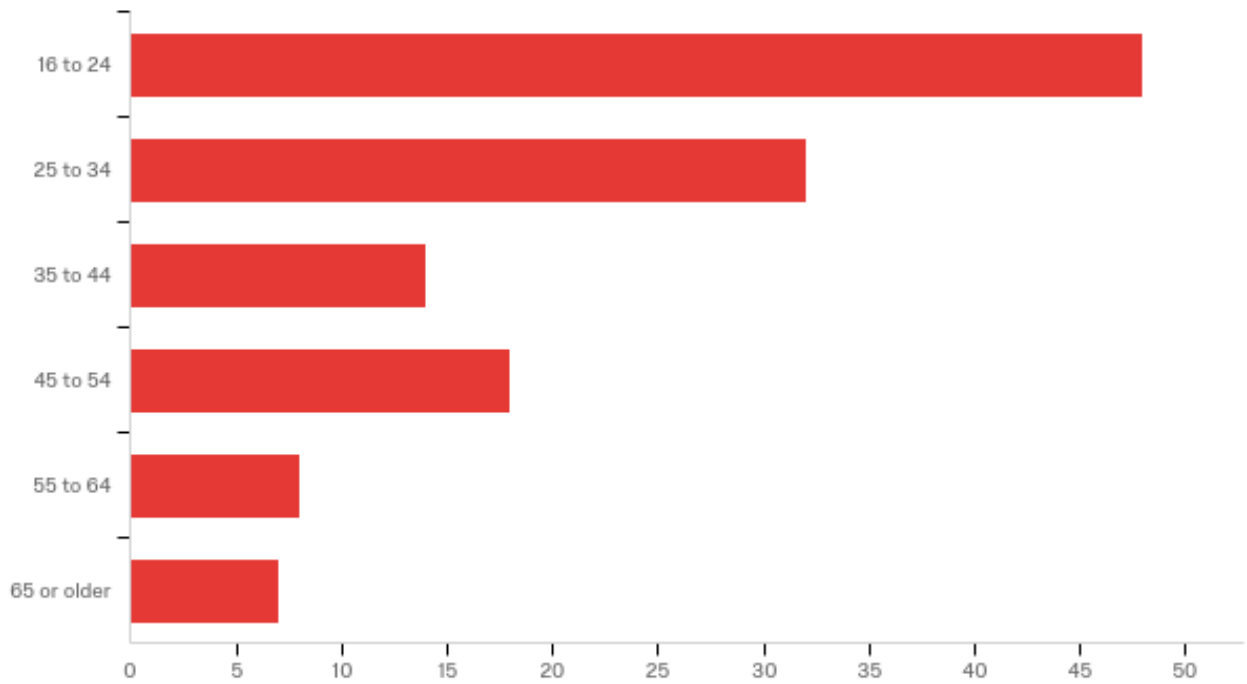
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What gender do you identify with?	1.00	2.00	1.76	0.42	0.18	127

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	23.62%	30
2	Female	76.38%	97
	Total	100%	127

Figure 4Q:

Questionnaire Results

Q14 - What age category do you fall into?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What age category do you fall into?	1.00	6.00	2.43	1.52	2.32	127

#	Answer	%	Count
1	16 to 24	37.80%	48
2	25 to 34	25.20%	32
3	35 to 44	11.02%	14
4	45 to 54	14.17%	18
5	55 to 64	6.30%	8
6	65 or older	5.51%	7
	Total	100%	127

Figure 5:

Research Participant One – Questionnaire Results

Q1 Do you watch YouTube?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q2 In a typical day about how many hours do you spend on YouTube?

3-4 Hours

Q3 Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

Laptop mainly, Amazon fire stick and phone.

Q4 What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

___2___ Lifestyle

___7___ Gaming

___4___ Vlogs

___1___ Beauty

___5___ DIY

___3___ Comedy

___6___ Music

Q5 Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?

Maybe

Q6 Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q6.B Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

Because you follow their lives and if one video is entertaining, the next should be too.

Q7 Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered is I do not know what a YouTuber is

Q8 Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?

Yes

Q8.B Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

They get paid to advertise products to their following who already trust and listen to them.

Q9 Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?

Yes

Q10 Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered No

Q10.B What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

Makeup, because they demo the product which you can't do yourself and you trust their opinion.

Q11 Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?

- 4 Technological Developments
- 2 Personalities on YouTube
- 3 Content on YouTube
- 1 Accessibility to the Internet
- 5 Culture and Environment
- 6 Entertainment and Pleasure

Q12 Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube's popularity in the last 5 years

- 3 Technological advances
- 2 YouTube personalities (YouTubers)
- 1 Content on YouTube

Q13 What gender do you identify with?

Female

Q14 What age category do you fall into?

16 to 24

Figure 6:

Interview Questions – Research Participant One

1. What do you like to watch on YouTube and why?
2. Where do you watch YouTube?
3. Why do you watch YouTube?
4. Are there certain YouTubers that you will ensure you watch?
5. Why do you come back to watch that YouTuber's videos?
6. Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTuber, if so what are they?
7. Is their video and voice important to you and why?
8. How important do you feel the audience is to the YouTube industry?
9. Where do you think the rise in YouTuber popularity has come from?
10. As you may know, many YouTubers make money off views, subscribers and content on YouTube. How does it make you feel that your actions on YouTube provide certain people with an income?
11. Does this thought alter your viewing habits at all?

Questionnaire Analysis Questions

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

Figure 7:

Interview Transcript - Research Participant One

Researcher: [00:00:18] So what do you like to watch on YouTube?

Participant 1: [00:00:21] I watch to a lot of different things, I would say. I watch mostly erm the same people over and over erm because I know that I like them. So I know they're going to make good stuff. I like to watch things that make me laugh mainly erm and also people I'm like jealous of like celebrities' kind of thing, like I'm obsessed with this girl Mia Maples because I kind of want to be her. So, I watch her videos cause she does things about like makeup and how she like things she wears and stuff, places she buys stuff from. Erm but yeah, I wouldn't watch them if they didn't also make me laugh really.

Researcher: [00:00:57] OK so you like to watch the same people?

Participant 1: [00:01:00] Yeah definitely. I'd say I haven't watched someone that I'm not subscribed to in literally so long. I'd say I would watch one video and then decide straight away whether I want to subscribe to them or not. So, then I watched like all their videos. Most of my subscribed... people I'm subscribed to, I've watched all of their videos, so I just have to wait every week for the next video to come out.

Researcher: [00:01:24] So would you only go into your subscription box or do you go to their profile personally and check up on them?

Participant 1: [00:01:30] I go to like my home page first where it's got the recommended which is normally the new videos that I'm subscribe... people I'm subscribed to upload. And then if there's a really interesting title I'll watch something but literally within the first minute I'll know if it's boring. And then if there's something like, if there is nothing left then I'll go to my subscribers, not subscribers but you know I mean, the people I'm subscribed to and like see if there's a video I haven't watched but more than often I watch them all.

Researcher: [00:02:04] So if you are saying in that minute that you know if it's going to be good or not, if that's someone that you're subscribed to, would that mean you'd unsubscribe or?

Participant 1: [00:02:13] That is a good question. No not necessarily saying I use the Mia Maples example again; she did a video but ASMR and I find that really boring. So I watched it cause I was like, I love her gotta support and then literally I watch the first minute and I was like this is really boring but I didn't like unsubscribe because I knew her next video would be something to do like her moving house or something like that. Like she just certain series that I like to keep up with.

Researcher: [00:02:38] But you did close the video? You didn't watch it all?

Participant 1: [00:02:40] Yes. I didn't watch that ASMR video because I think she was trying to do something that's trendy at the moment. Because there's like people who do. Like I tried ASMR but I just find it really boring.

Researcher: [00:02:52] So you don't like when certain people do things that are on trend or?

Participant 1: [00:02:57] I do sometimes it depends if it's something I follow. I love makeup challenges because I like to see how they... like... because most the time they're quite funny. I find ASMA is not funny.

Researcher: [00:03:09] As a topic?

Participant 1: [00:03:09] Yeah. It's really boring and I don't really like it anyway. But yeah, I think even because it's someone I like to watch doesn't make it interesting.

Researcher: [00:03:19] But you still try to watch it?

Participant 1: [00:03:20] I'll still give it a go but then now I've tried to watch so many ASMR videos I just can't watch them so. Like I watched... I saw Safiya Nygaard, one of my favourites again, just literally yesterday posted a 'I try ASMR video' and I haven't watched. Whereas normally I would literally watch anything she posted, I would watch it in like within ten minutes cause I get a notification.

Researcher: [00:03:39] OK so other content that you previously watched on YouTube would affect how you see other people's, even if it is someone you loved?

Participant 1: [00:03:46] Yeah definitely.

Researcher: [00:03:47] OK and where do you watch YouTube mostly? What devices and whereabouts are you located when you watch YouTube?

Participant 1: [00:03:56] Always when I'm at home, really. Because I find it's definitely my main source of entertainment because I don't really watch TV. I watch Netflix erm but that's literally the only other source of like video that I watch. So, YouTube is definitely at home thing. Erm I watch it in my office which is more like a second living room on my laptop or I watch it while I'm in bed on my Amazon Firestick mostly because my taste is very different to my boyfriend's tastes so we can't really watch YouTube together and say he will watch in a separate room to me.

Researcher: [00:04:34] OK. So, you said that entertainment is one of the main reasons that you would watch YouTube but on your questionnaire you refer to it as one of the least influential to YouTube's popularity. What do you think about that?

Participant 1: [00:04:48] Mm hmm.... I don't know because I don't think I'm influenced. I guess my choices of like watching, like yeah my choices of what I watch on YouTube is definitely affected by what entertains me, I wouldn't say they influence me to other things, like the fact I'm entertained I'd say like... I dunno... like the personality of the person more influences me rather than the fact that they entertain me. Does it make sense?

Researcher: [00:05:13] Yeah. OK. We slightly did already cover this but are there certain YouTubers that you always ensure you watch; do you know when they upload, or do you know a schedule?

Participant 1: [00:05:25] Yeah I have like a rare few people that I have on post notifications. So, I have... I'd say like five or six people I have the notification set on so that when they

upload I get like a notification. But I watched YouTube so much that I go on it every day. So, I'll see pretty much straight away if someone's uploaded. And I also know when some YouTubers posts, so Mia Maples for example posts Fridays and Sundays. So, know on a Sunday I'm gonna have that content to watch.

Researcher: [00:06:06] And how do you feel if that content is not there?

Participant 1: [00:06:10] Sad.

Researcher: [00:06:10] Just sad?

Participant 1: [00:06:11] Well like I was quite sad erm... I was quite sad on Sunday because she posted ASMR video, so I felt like I didn't have anything to watch. It's quite like unfulfilling... unsatisfying. Erm as I said she does like different series, but you don't know when they're going to be posted. So, I'd be like oww when is she going to post, like when is she going to post part 4 of like this certain series and stuff and is quite frustrating but...

Researcher: [00:06:45] OK, and you said there are certain YouTubers that you go to watch. Are there certain types of video that you make sure you watch?

Participant 1: [00:06:56] What like do you mean... like like genres?

[00:07:00] Yeah. So, you said about ASMR video you kind of disregard them, if there was a posted, like I know you said about makeup challenges...

Participant 1: [00:07:09] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:07:10] So if someone done a makeup challenge are you like I'm definitely going to watch that... or?

Participant 1: [00:07:12] Yes.

Researcher: [00:07:12] Like this persons done a moving vlog so I'm gonna watch... definitely going to watch that?

Participant 1: [00:07:15] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:07:16] Is there are certain types that...

Participant 1: [00:07:17] Definitely. I'd say it definitely depends on what's trendy because like makeup challenges I will watch a certain amount of makeup challenges from like Geoffrey Star, James Charles say where it's like I copy or I watch erm so-and-sos channel and try to do their... do... you know... I mean or what's it called... or I would recreate a James Charles video. Then I would like search like 'I recreate' in YouTube and see like what other ones have done it. But then things like like the moving vlog that I've been watching of Mia Maples, I've never watched that of anyone else. Erm I'd be like why I find it really boring. But it's because like I like all her videos and find her really fun and stuff. It's like a really big thing for her because she is like my age so her moving out the first time. I have very similar styled to her so I like obsessive with that series, but if it was someone else I don't think I would be like bothered so I would never search like 'moving out' I like don't think. So yeah, definitely makeup erm

it's a very similar thing with vlogs, like I hate watching vlogs unless it's someone I really like cause like I don't really care about their day kinda thing.

Researcher: [00:08:25] Yeah. So, you mentioned about searching up in the search bar. Is that your go to over, so you've look through your homepage and your subscribers that would be like a last resort or?

Participant 1: [00:08:36] Yeah, I'd say well... no I'd say the last resort it would be like going to Mia Maple's channel or Sofiya Nygaard and searching back to like two years ago and watching a video like that because I normally go forwards but I run out. But I'd say no by saying I watch a really good video which is like erm you know like a full face using only my hands or something on makeup and I've watched like two people do that and they're really funny. I'll then search like 'full face using' and watch the ones about the names that I recognised.

Researcher: [00:09:11] OK, so you almost use search bar when you know what you want to find already?

Participant 1: [00:09:14] Yeah, I wouldn't really watch like people that I've not seen before... only like the celebs.

Researcher: [00:09:22] Erm, would you say there are certain characteristics and attributes that attracted you to a YouTuber? And if so, what do you think they are?

Participant 1: [00:09:29] Yeah definitely, as I said like if I don't find them funny I would get really bored really quickly. And I nearly watch, nearly almost watch entirely American YouTube. I only watch one British YouTuber because I just don't have the same kind of like sense of humour, I find an American sense humour is like a lot funnier. Erm also like the production values I think of American YouTube. For example, a lot more British people do like vlogs or they do where they just like sit at their computer and kind of film themselves, whereas I feel like American YouTubers put a lot more like production value in, like Shane Dawson... he does look a lot more like director based stuff and it kind of like changes that kind of YouTube content that I like. So, like yeah funny, putting in effort into their videos erm and someone that I like... relate to I'd say.

Researcher: [00:10:25] Yep, so would you say that the YouTuber's voice and video is important to you?

Participant 1: [00:10:31] Their voices as in the actual voice?

Researcher: [00:10:33] As in their opinions and what they say to you, do you class that as important?

Participant 1: [00:10:38] Yeah, I mean I'm quite opinionated so more than often I won't agree with what anyone says anyway but say I'm watching like a makeup video and they say like 'oh this is actually a really good product or this isn't' that definitely like affect how I feel about that product. For example, like there's a foundation that I love, and I saw one of my favourite YouTubers the other day saying that they hate it and I was like that's really weird, like why? And then it makes me second guess my foundation and things like that. But, I yeah I think it is important and it definitely affects the things that I buy and things that I think about.

Researcher: [00:11:16] How important do you think the audience is? So how important are you to YouTube and YouTubers?

Participant 1: [00:11:22] Well I mean without... without the audience they wouldn't like kind of have the popularity that they have, and audiences definitely decide what gets popular, if makes sense... like as a whole. Things like make up challenges wouldn't be a thing if we didn't find them entertaining. So, you have to kind of have that kind of audience there already. I think commenting on like videos doesn't really do anything. But just in general like watching, like if you watch it then obviously it effects it, but if you don't obviously it doesn't, if that make sense?

Researcher: [00:12:04] So is that why you haven't, well you put maybe on your questionnaire for commenting. Is that why because you don't feel like has a...

Participant 1: [00:12:10] Yeah. I genuinely can't think of a time that I would, I would of but then I wouldn't not post for a certain reason. Does that make sense? Like the only time I can think of that I would of commented is asking like 'what product is this' like if they haven't mentioned it. But I would never, I don't think give my opinion because I just don't think they would read it. I don't think... like that's not why they do it. They like... do you know what I mean? They... they know they're gonna get hate and they're going to get likes so they don't really care about the comments so.

Researcher: [00:12:39] You don't think they care about the comments?

Participant 1: [00:12:40] I don't think many of them do. I don't think like someone like really big, like I dunno... Safiya Nygaard like got millions and millions of subscribers, I don't think she particularly look at her comments.

Researcher: [00:12:55] Okay, and obviously YouTube has become very popular, especially YouTubers, where do you think this has come from and why?

Participant 1: [00:13:04] I think it's definitely like the fact that we can get YouTube from anywhere. I personally like never use to watch YouTube because I thought it was just something like you have on your phone and I just never sit on my phone and just stare at my phone screen for hours. Whereas, I'm always at my computer and I'm always watching my actual physical TV, so the fact that I could watch YouTube through my TV meant that I watched a lot more of it.

Researcher: [00:13:27] Yeah....

Participant 1: [00:13:27] So I think that definitely increases like the popularity of it. I'd definitely say that the fact that YouTubers themselves become more like celebrity like, I remember when I was a teenager I'd heard of names like Pewdiepie and stuff like that but I didn't really think much more of it whereas now, you hear of people like you hear of Shane Dawson's like content and you're like wow that's really cool I need to watch that kind of thing... and I dunno, like things... and and... more people watch it the more you hear about it.

Researcher: [00:13:59] Yeah. So, you say more people watch it and hear about it, where do you hear about YouTuber's and things from YouTube?

Participant 1: [00:14:07] Erm... I mean with... with having certain people that I follow on YouTube obviously I follow them on their other social media platforms as well. So, I follow them like on Twitter and stuff and a lot of the time they will post things to do with their videos... like they'll post like 'ask me questions to do with this' or things like that. I look at a lot of that and I get kind of psyched up. Shane Dawson's posting a video tomorrow that people have been waiting for... for like months because he's been like dropping teasers about it which again is like a really TV kind of thing which takes a lot more production and a lot of my friends watch YouTube as well. So, they'll be like 'have you seen this video about this, this and this' and I'll be like no and then I'll go watch it and then I'll probably binge watch after.

Researcher: [00:14:53] OK, and your friends what kind of age and are they? Like... are they like older? Are they younger or your age?

Participant 1: [00:14:58] My similar age erm, one of my friends who I went to school we have really really similar tastes so we kind of like swap and share whereas like that's a girl. I'd say my friends that I have that are boys have really really different tastes to me, so I don't really share any kind of things with them because as I said I watch makeup a lot. But even the comedians that I watch, they don't really relate to.

Researcher: [00:15:23] Yes, so most of your friends that you talk about YouTube are similar age to you then?

Participant 1: [00:15:27] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:15:29] And as you know and you said YouTubers make money off their view, subscriber and their content. How does that make you feel that your actions of watching them provide people with an income? Does that affect you in any way.?

Participant 1: [00:15:43] I mean most of the time because I have... like, it's so weird how you feel like a connection with someone you don't actually know. Like I was watching someone's video, and someone told me that if you watch the entire advert they get like more money and so I'm like yeah I'll watch this advert for you like do you know what I mean? Erm, because it makes you feel like you're like supporting them. Like I love YouTube and I think the more people that can earn from it and things like that the more that it's going to continue to thrive. I used to love Vine and that shut down because people didn't earn money from it. So, I think it's great that people can like earn a living from something that provides so much entertainment and it's like real entertainment... it's like real life people it's not like not acting or anything.

Researcher: [00:16:46] So you just mentioned there that you think that YouTubers are real life people but in your questionnaire and you put them down a celebrity?

Participant 1: [00:16:54] Yes so it's difficult because I know they started off as normal people which I guess celebrities did as well but they have a talent which I feel like with YouTubers anyone can do it, you just have to have a strong personality. And I think a lot of it is about luck like the amount of people you get to watch it. Erm and like that YouTube algorithm and stuff erm... but I think of them as celebrities... some of them. I think of like Shane Dawson as a celebrity because he has like this huge house in like L.A. Whereas there's other YouTubers who are like... I know who aren't like really rich and they just like still live with their parents or stuff like that. And they're just still trying to do it to like make a living. Whereas like there's others who just you know have so much money.

Researcher: [00:17:46] So depending on their popularity and subscriber counts depends on how you view them as a celebrity would you say?

Participant 1: [00:17:53] Yeah defiantly say so. Cause you know they're get money.

Researcher: [00:17:57] Yeah.

Participant 1: [00:17:57] And I guess when you... you can tell 100% when a YouTuber is like now starting to get loads of money because their content does change.

Researcher: [00:18:07] And things change for the better or the worse or?

Participant 1: [00:18:11] Most cases for the worse. But that's just the kind of person I am. I'm not like... I'm not rich and I don't like... I don't really want to see videos about them like shopping in Gucci and stuff like that because I can't shop at Gucci, like it's not relatable whereas I'd rather watch someone like talk about how they bought loads of stuff at IKEA because I can then go to IKEA and buy them things. Do you know I mean?

Researcher: [00:18:34] Yeah. So, in your questionnaire you put down the categories of YouTubers that you watch, and you put beauty, lifestyle then comedy. You've spoken a lot about the main characteristic of a YouTuber having to be comical.

Participant 1: [00:18:51] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:18:51] So would you say it's a combination of people doing beauty videos but are also comical?

Participant 1: [00:18:57] Yeah. Cause I... I don't know what comedy comes under, like the comedy in my head is like pranks and stuff like that and people who are just sitting down and trying to be funny. Whereas I think most of the time that's not very funny, but I watch things like Cody Ko for example, where he does a lot of commentary about other people and it makes me laugh. So that's the kind of comedy I think of. But yeah, I'd say if you look to my recommended it would be mostly beauty. But I would find there'd be beauty people that I find kind of funny.

Researcher: [00:19:37] Yeah. OK. And also, in your questionnaire you said that, you said here you've purchase makeup because they demo a product which you can't do yourself and you trust their opinion.

Participant 1: [00:19:49] Yes.

Researcher: [00:19:49] Why would you say you trust their opinion?

Participant 1: [00:19:53] Erm... mainly because I know YouTubers just start out, they start out with makeup as like just a lover of makeup because they're not normally like makeup artists. They just love the product and they know they're going to do makeup which is kind of where I am. Like I love makeup and I love playing with makeup and then they have more opportunities to test it than I do like because they get sent PR and they have the money to go and buy these things. They can test it and I know I'm more trusting of their opinion because I know where

they kind of started was like where I kind of am at. Erm... but then I watch people who also have like a really similar skin tone to me so that... like the same foundations they talk about being really good would be something I would use. Like, I would never really watch like a really really tanned person because the products wouldn't be the same on them as it would on me.

Researcher: [00:20:47] OK.

Participant 1: [00:20:48] Does that make sense?

Researcher: [00:20:48] Yeah. So, would you therefore say that the look of the person of the YouTuber would affect if you watch them or not?

Participant 1: [00:20:57] Only in makeup I think because it sounds like really like snobby, not snobby but it sounds really bad to say that I only watch like people who have really pale skin but it's only when I'm looking at like foundation stuff. Like if I saw someone like erm... there's a YouTuber I follow called Alicia and she's really really really dark skinned, if she is talking about an eyeshadow pallet, then yeah that's fine and I would watch that and really enjoy that. But obviously if she's talking about what foundations worked for her we're not going to like agree.

Researcher: [00:21:30] Yes OK, and finally you talked about how YouTubers and celebrity. How would you compare YouTube and celebrities that you say... you said earlier they have a talent; normal celebrities have talent? How would you compare them to a YouTuber?

Participant 1: [00:21:59] Well I mean, I think the two have been merging much more recently. For example, Will Smith just won like one of the upcoming YouTuber stars awards or something... was nominated for one. Whereas obviously he, I think, he's done much more impressive things than that. And I think that Jeffrey Star obviously he's a lot more than a YouTuber. He was a singer. He got signed by like I dunno who was... Usher someone like that. So, they're definitely like mingle.

Researcher: [00:22:35] Would you say this is sort of hierarchy of who goes where? Or what kind of celebrity they are?

Participant 1: [00:22:41] Yeah. It's really hard because I think of like Shane Dawson would get to meet people like Josh Peck from Drake and Josh because he's really high on YouTube. And that makes him kind of celebrity. So they get to mingle with normal celebrities like proper celebrities but people with much less sub counts... subscriber counts wouldn't be in that kind of world as a lot of people who like... if you don't live in L.A you don't have that kind of celebrity lifestyle. But I would... if a celebrity tried to market a piece of makeup to me I would be much less likely to buy it because I don't know that they have like this love of makeup that I know a lot of YouTubers have and they like don't appreciate certain products and things like that. And I can't look back at different makeup products they've tried and things like that. Erm... and I just think 'oh they're just doing it because it's a celebrity face' whereas if I know Youtubers like put their name to it kind of thing that they say they like it, like... I'm much more likely to trust them because I think they've got a lot more to lose than a celebrity. They could lose like their integrity and stuff on YouTube and lose all their subscribers. Whereas, a celebrity if they get like, if someone's like 'actually that product is rubbish' they're just going

to be like 'yeah I know but I got paid to do it'. Do you know what I mean? It doesn't make a difference because they're still got that talent and they're not going to lose their following.

Researcher: [00:24:17] Yeah, OK. And how long would you say you've been watching YouTube for?

Participant 1: [00:24:20] I say mainly like binge watching it, which I do what I do now, only like three years maybe? Before that I would only watch it for like music and things like that because I used to watch a lot more TV. Whereas, now I'd say YouTube is my main source of entertainment. So yeah about three years.

Researcher: [00:24:39] OK... brilliant. Thank you.

Participant 1: [00:24:41] Thank you.

Figure 8:

Research Participant Two – Questionnaire Results

Q1 Do you watch YouTube?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q2 In a typical day about how many hours do you spend on YouTube?

2-4 Hours

Q3 Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

iPhone, tablet, PC.

Q4 What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

___5___ Lifestyle

___1___ Gaming

___3___ Vlogs

___6___ Beauty

___7___ DIY

___2___ Comedy

___4___ Music

Q5 Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?

Yes

Q6 Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q6.B Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

The content is the same throughout usually so if I enjoyed one video then I'm bound to enjoy the next.

Q7 Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered is I do not know what a YouTuber is

Q8 Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?

Yes

Q8.B Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

As they have such a big following, evidently their followers enjoy them and some even have a fandom about them, meaning its more likely to influence their audience as they enjoy the person producing the videos and their personality.

Q9 Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?

Yes

Q10 Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered No

Q10.B What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

Mostly tech upgrades as most “tech” YouTubers have a sense of what’s good on the market and what’s bad.

Q11 Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?

- ___1___ Technological Developments
- ___2___ Personalities on YouTube
- ___5___ Content on YouTube
- ___3___ Accessibility to the Internet
- ___6___ Culture and Environment
- ___4___ Entertainment and Pleasure

Q12 Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube’s popularity in the last 5 years

- ___1___ Technological advances
- ___2___ YouTube personalities (YouTubers)
- ___3___ Content on YouTube

Q13 What gender do you identify with?

Male

Q14 What age category do you fall into?

16 to 24

Figure 9:

Interview Questions – Research Participant Two

1. What do you like to watch on YouTube and why?
2. When someone uploads to YouTube, how do you first hear of this new content?
3. What makes a YouTube video worth watching?
4. Where do you watch YouTube and on what device?
5. Why do you watch YouTube? What do you get from watching videos?
6. How would you relate the two words YouTuber and talent?
7. Are there certain YouTubers or content that you will ensure you watch?
8. Why do you come back to watch them or that certain content of videos?
9. Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTube video, if so, what are they?
10. How would you compare traditional celebrities to YouTubers?
11. What do you think the audience's role is in the YouTube industry?
12. How important is this role?
13. What technical advances do you think have allowed YouTube to grow and evolve?
14. Where do you think the rise in YouTuber popularity has come from?

Questionnaire Analysis

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

Figure 10:

Interview Transcript - Research Participant Two

Researcher: [00:00:05] What do you like to watch on YouTube and why?

Participant 2: [00:00:06] The type of content I like to watch on YouTube mostly is like gaming mostly, like technology kind of videos, if it's about... like if I'm on my computer and like programming, programming questionnaire videos where a programmer sits with the plethora of questions and they answer. So, it's like a Q and A but in terms of programming. Yeah that's what I watch.

Researcher: [00:00:31] And why would you say this type of content appeals to you?

Participant 2: [00:00:36] For me, it appeals to me because I do computer science so obviously I wanna know some programming answers, if I try and google on Facebook or Google sorry it doesn't really work entirely. For gaming and that kind of genre, I watched that mostly because I game and that's a hobby of mine so the type content kind of appeals to me because I want to watch other people do the same and see how good I can get good at that certain game and it's quite entertaining if they have like a personality behind them but yeah.

Researcher: [00:01:09] When someone uploads to YouTube, how do you first hear of this new content?

Participant 2: [00:01:17] Mostly because I go on the recommenders page or if I go on my home page and my subscriptions I just scroll down or I will search for the name if I want to know what content they've uploaded quite recently or if they have uploaded content or whatever.

Researcher: [00:01:33] And which page would you say you go to first to find content to watch?

Participant 2: [00:01:44] The suggestion page not so much, the subscription page I do quite frequently but to answer that question it's probably the home page and suggestion that I use most.

Researcher: [00:01:54] So why do you not use the subscription page much? Are you not subscribed to all the creators that you watch?

Participant 2: [00:01:54] I am subscribed to the YouTubers that I watch it's just sometimes the content doesn't reach out in my subscriptions, so evidently I have to try and search up a name on YouTube and that just... are a lot easier for me or I go on external like social media platforms like Twitter to see if they've uploaded content and I check that quite regularly to see what they've uploaded and you know how frequently they upload so I can know what daily schedule they have.

Researcher: [00:02:34] So with this schedule, do you know the YouTubers you are subscribed to daily upload schedule?

Participant 2: [00:02:40] For the most part yeah, they... it's almost... it is more not daily as a sense, forgive me, it's weekly I would say but I would say I do... I would say I do.

Researcher: [00:02:52] What kind of proportion would you say? All of them or...

Participant 2: [00:02:58] Probably a... probably quite small portion because I just end up in this like rabbit hole of content that I just don't quite know what I'm watching. It could just be music, it could be what I really fancy at that point but for the most part the subscribed YouTubers I mostly know their kind of schedule...yeah, so....

Researcher: [00:03:17] What makes a YouTube video worth watching? What makes you click on a certain video?

Participant 2: [00:03:26] If it has a strong title, if it has a good thumbnail because that is kind of appealing. It's like looking at a book cover and you should never judge a book by its cover but when you kind of look at it on YouTube because there's so much content out there it's just easier to distinguish what's good you know... what's good content what's bad. If it doesn't have a good quality thumbnail for me I don't really wanna click on it unless the captions especially like eye catching, then I would hope that answers the question.

Researcher: [00:03:57] So it seems that technical aspects are important to you when choosing a YouTube video to watch?

Participant 2: [00:04:08] Yeah. Yeah. Certainly. I guess it's... I guess it's how I've always been really but yeah, I'm quiet... I would say I'm quite picky with the type of content I look at, yeah.

Researcher: [00:04:22] Where do you watch YouTube and on what device?

Participant 2: [00:04:33] It's mostly on my personal computer but...

Researcher: [00:04:36] And where is your computer?

Participant 2: [00:04:37] Yes at home yes, yeah.

Researcher: [00:04:38] And why do you watch YouTube? What do you get from watching video?

Participant 2: [00:04:50] It's almost like a... like if I am bored and if I... if I were in the mood to like binge videos then I kind of want... I get just some type of content I could easily quickly watch. Mostly it's if I... if I'm having a break from doing work or whatever and I just need some time to like relax then sure videos most probably on YouTube would be lasting 10 minutes, so it's quite a good time frame for me to like have a break. So, I yeah, I would say.... yeah like if I don't know... I guess... I guess... does that answer your question?

Researcher: [00:05:29] Yes, yes that does. Following from the last question though, what would you say you gain from watching YouTube videos?

Participant 2: [00:05:35] Yeah... erm sometimes, yeah sometimes I don't really gain anything. If it's like informative then I definitely would again like gain some knowledge of what kind of

area I wanted to look at but if it's like bench worthy content that I'm not really going to learn from then I wouldn't really get anything.

Researcher: [00:05:58] Okay, so only if something gives you information you gain something from it?

Participant 2: [00:05:59] Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: [00:06:00] And how would you relate the two words, YouTuber and talent?

Participant 2: [00:06:08] How would I relate them?

Researcher: [00:06:09] Yes, so do you think YouTubers require talent to perform their job?

Participant 2: [00:06:15] Yes certainly, certainly. They definitely have talent. Some YouTube I cannot say they definitely do, but for the most part they definitely have talent because you have to... have a, you have to have almost a personality now to shine out on YouTube. You cannot be like... three years ago the type of content that people would upload is just more general but rather now it's more specific. So, you definitely have to have a big strong personality to kind of stand out. I guess I hope that answers the question.

Researcher: [00:06:48] So would you class personality as a talent?

Participant 2: [00:06:55] Yeah, definitely. Yes, basically yeah.

Researcher: [00:06:57] Okay, no worries. Are there certain YouTubers and content you will ensure you watch?

Participant 2: [00:07:05] Like ensure that I would watch like...

Researcher: [00:07:07] Yes, so a certain type of video you will always watch...

Participant 2: [00:07:07] Yeah...

Researcher: [00:07:07] Or and certain YouTuber you will make sure you watch no matter the content?

Participant 2: [00:07:20] Yeah definitely. Yeah definitely. I have some personal friends on the platform that I would always want to support so I watch that kind of content and just people that I know will upload high quality content. So, for the most part it's like tech YouTubers or comedians that I would regularly check up on and see if they've uploaded. A good example of this would be for... it's not almost in those two genres but Shane Dawson he does these like documentary type videos that are really popular on YouTube at this point and I can almost always rely on his content because it's always high quality and really really well edited as well as really interesting. So yeah there's definitely YouTubers and content that I would go back and make sure I watch.

Researcher: [00:08:03] Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTube video, if so, what are they?

Participant 2: [00:08:18] By personality or just by looking at the video like as its thumbnail and such?

Researcher: [00:08:27] Let's say both.

Participant 2: [00:08:27] Both?

Researcher: [00:08:27] Yes both, sorry

Participant 2: [00:08:27] That's okay.

Researcher: [00:08:27] So certain personality traits of a YouTuber and characteristics of a video.

Participant 2: [00:08:32] Right. Right. Could you repeat the question again sorry? Just so I have it a fresh.

Researcher: [00:08:37] Yes, no problem. Are their certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTube video and to a YouTuber?

Participant 2: [00:08:45] I would say, as I said before with a good thumbnail, appealing thumbnail, I guess a good title and inside the content are a kind of expects the type of content to be kind of high quality, on a good like camera with high quality audio. I guess those kind of factors are really appealing if I want to you know go and watch a video because otherwise if I'm watching a video that's kind of low quality then I'm not gonna quite enjoy as much as I would. I guess the personality first and foremost because without that you cannot really sit through a longer video. I just... just how they edit, I guess the way it like, the type of way they edit, if it's for a comedy then they... they will edit it a different way to how technology YouTuber would edit, like with aerial shots, technology YouTubers do that quite often. But with comedians they do like shortcut videos and that's quite funny especially editing you can really make that comedic, so I guess those are the characteristics that I would look for.

Researcher: [00:09:52] And would these reasons make you come back to watch a YouTuber or certain content or are there other reasons?

Participant 2: [00:10:04] Yeah, they are actually. Good visuals and audio and a personality.

Researcher: [00:10:04] Okay, and how would you compare traditional celebrities to YouTubers?

Participant 2: [00:10:04] I Guess I wouldn't really make a... I'm not really sure actually.

Researcher: [00:10:05] So are YouTubers and tradition celebrities for example actors or athletes similar or dissimilar in any way?

Participant 2: [00:10:05] Yeah, certainly... certainly. I feel like traditional famous, like people from the industries and stuff rather than like actual YouTubers would definitely differ because some YouTubers do not have like personalities. They just make content like just for the sole purpose of making content and obviously that doesn't apply for the whole platform itself, but you do get those certain YouTubers that can really outstand each other and really

differentiate... differentiate themselves. To answer the question though, it's a really hard one because I would definitely count YouTubers as celebrities like without a doubt, it's just celebrities will have that... they'll be well known in the media... like the media they won't get criticized as much as I would expect YouTubers would be. I feel like there's a sense of hate in the media so I guess like mainstream, say for an actor for example, they'll probably get treated a lot better than a YouTuber would. However, if YouTuber did something like publicly embarrassing, I don't think you will get caught up as much as like an actor would. So, there's... there's definitely a different boundary of how... how things would get publicized to the... to the... to the like sort of what is the word....

Researcher: [00:11:35] Society? Audience?

Participant 2: [00:11:35] Yes, to just society I guess.

Researcher: [00:11:36] And why do you think there is this difference between celebrities in traditional media and online celebrities such as YouTubers?

Participant 2: [00:11:39] Hmm. I guess because the media don't really understand it. They don't understand how it's got popular. They don't really understand how this platform that once uploaded like cute dog videos have gained like millions and millions of people to this just one website. They just don't... they can't fathom it so they'll criticize anything they can get. Quite a lot of YouTubers made like really really small mistakes and they'll get obliterated by the social media, I just feel like they don't understand it they'll just criticize it more and more and I guess it's not as mainstream as as... as they used to... so yeah.

Researcher: [00:12:23] What do you think the audience's role is in the YouTube industry?

Participant 2: [00:12:32] The audience for, I guess... I guess is supporting the content creator and actually sometimes they're kind of responsibilities do vary. I guess you do get some mean comments sometimes but it's almost supporting the... the personality, supporting the channel, making sure they like... you know subscribe and watch the videos quite regularly and that really supports the person who is running the channel. I guess that's what their role is as an audience member yeah.

Researcher: [00:13:03] And how important would you say this role is?

Participant 2: [00:13:07] Very important. Yeah. Without... without them they wouldn't, the personality wouldn't exist whatsoever. Yeah. It's a very short question sorry.

Researcher: [00:13:18] No that is fine you have answered the question.

Participant 2: [00:13:21] OK good.

Researcher: [00:13:22] What technical advances do you think have allowed YouTube to grow and evolve?

Participant 2: [00:13:38] YouTube when it first came out in 2006 was such a small platform and it can only encode videos is such a small rate. So, you only had videos reaching like 2..240P which is very like small resolution scale to what they used to now. Technology advances have just grown so rapid you can upload a video in like the space of 10 minutes rather than like a

day or two days with YouTube from... from when it first started. It's such a different platform as well in the past five years is still definitely changed. It didn't even reach 1080P till like two years ago or three years ago and that's such a big thing. So, I guess the technology advancements have really... really helped YouTube to you know push their boundaries on what they can actually upload and how fast videos can upscale themselves. I mean, you can get videos on YouTube that reach out to 4K which is absolutely insane. You don't really get that in normal televised, you know, TV productions and you can just get that with some random YouTuber that you've never met. I just think that's absolutely brilliant that they've kind of developed this platform to enable that.

Researcher: [00:14:53] Okay... and where do you think the rise in YouTubers popularity has come from?

Participant 2: [00:15:08] It's almost like YouTube encoding and their algorithm and obviously the speed of what the Internet's progressed by. I mean the Internet mainly because the Internet was very slow and you couldn't really upload things that fast you couldn't really reach a certain megabit per second and obviously, people's upload and download speeds being very very slow compared to now and you'd probably have to pay somewhere up to like 200 pounds to reach back... like back... like four or five years ago to reach what you can get really now. So obviously upload speed is just absolutely gone insane and you get like providers like Virgin and AT&T in America do a fiber optic connections which... which is absolutely insane because that just proves that the Internet's progressed so far that you know you can upload videos so quickly but back to the question... I guess... I guess it's more... it's more like the encoding of videos. So if a video, back then I say back then a lot, I mean by like two thousand nine, that kind of era, by 2009 it was very very bad and you... you didn't really get videos that were that high quality compared to now obviously, codings got a lot better so you can upload videos in 1080P. It's almost like investments in the web I would say as a generalized answer.

Researcher: [00:16:46] Okay, thank you for that. I am now going to ask you a few questions from your questionnaire you submitted if that's okay?

Participant 2: [00:16:52] Yeah. Go for it.

Researcher: [00:16:53] You stated that you like to watch the same content from a YouTuber. If the content is the same or very similar, why do you re-watch it?

Participant 2: [00:17:06] I feel like if you enjoyed the content that you watch you're bound to enjoy the content that they provide. Usually what happens with the YouTubers is if they get a popular video then they're going to persist to do that kind of same video. For example, if someone did a comedic video about say they... they had like some scandal on YouTube it has upset massive and then they would get perceived this on news channel just from that one video and if they got a lot of traction, then that video would just persist to go throughout the, as in, that video would replicate throughout their channel sorry and they will be known for doing that type of content. It's like, if a comedian did like stand up on YouTube and then they'll get known for doing standup. People will go back to watch them more and more and they'll get used to that kind of content and want to watch them because obviously they're funny or if a tech YouTuber is really good at explaining things then people want to learn more. You know there's a plethora of examples but for the most part this is definitely like a familiarity of... of the of what kind of content they have. If that answers your questions, yeah.

Researcher: [00:18:16] Okay. You also said about enjoyment of a video. What makes a video enjoyable?

Participant 2: [00:18:31] I feel like it's more... more like a relaxation for me just to sit back and just it's like watching a movie. As weird as it sounds you just sit back, watch someone you know rant on for like 10 minutes about something random or if it's something you're interested in then they'll just rant on 10 minutes about that. It's just kind of relaxing in a way as well and it's kind of like... it's kind of like a mood, to make your mood a lot more chill, if that's the right word.

Researcher: [00:20:20] Yeah that is fine. You've spoken about fandoms in your answers.

Participant 2: [00:20:20] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:20:20] What exactly is a fandom or to have a fandom?

Participant 2: [00:20:30] Erm... to have a fandom is almost like having a fan base for like a celebrity to put it in perspective. A fandom's where you get a viewer, but they go a little over like more, they'll do more for the YouTuber. So, they'll like draw pictures of them or that. It's not obsessive but it's almost like they loved the person providing the videos. A fandom is almost what brings like, if someone... if a YouTubers was to launch merch that's what the fandom would really really want because... because they want to support the creator and then that. I wouldn't say obsessed, but they are obsessed. They are... they are obsessed with the creator essentially, I guess.

Researcher: [00:21:13] And who would you say is more important a regular viewer or the fandom?

Participant 2: [00:21:21] I don't even... I don't particularly know because I feel like I would say yeah the fandom's more important than the general audience because they're there... they're very like a security blanket almost for... for the content creator because they know for sure that these people... the videos are definitely gonna reach them and the videos you know, gonna get support from them and they are going to support them no matter what. And I guess... I guess for just an avid viewer of the channel they don't... they'll probably watch one or two videos whereas a fandom will probably watch the entire every single video of their channel. So, I guess for the content creator for in terms of the question, for the content creator it definitely would be important for them to have the fandom rather than the average viewer.

Researcher: [00:22:10] And what percentage wise would you say the audience is split up between fandom and a regular audience?

Participant 2: [00:22:10] Percentage wise? Uh like, I'd say like maybe like 80 percent normal people just watching and 20 percent fandom. Sometimes it could be quite varied. I would probably almost say the fandoms bought like a little bit more but 20 percent seems more realistic as in general most of the people if their avid viewers they're... they're not... they don't really particularly want to put themselves as like... sound themselves as a fandom or be part of the fandom, they just they just like the content so they would just follow it. It doesn't mean to say they're part of the fandom and that just means they really enjoy the content and they will watch every single video, but a fandom is almost like a step up from that. So yeah, definitely for the percentages 20/80.

Researcher: [00:23:11] Have you ever been a part of a fandom?

Participant 2: [00:23:14] I haven't. No, I actually haven't...no.

Researcher: [00:23:15] So how do you know about fandoms?

Participant 2: [00:23:17] I see about it online quite frequently. And I know some of my personal friends definitely have fandoms and they tell me about it and that's basically how I know how obsessive they can be sometimes but yeah.

Researcher: [00:23:38] Okay. So, you also spoke about purchasing items because of a tech YouTuber...

Participant 2: [00:23:51] Yeah...Yeah.

Researcher: [00:23:51] Why do you trust a YouTuber's opinion? What makes you buy because of them?

Participant 2: [00:23:58] In that particular example, for tech YouTubers, as they... if it's not like sponsored content and they're just saying that for the sake of it and they're saying it because it's good, I'll definitely trust them because they have more experience in that particular genre. If it was, say like they... they do reviews on a set of products like a mic, microphone for example, then I would say I would probably trust them more than just someone reviewing it on the website because they know they've had experience with a microphone, they actually have the microphone and they can talk about it and just say the advantages and disadvantages and that's a quite... a real review rather than someone going online or like... and just saying 'oh this is bad' because that's the general feedback from an item because people on not gonna get feedback on something and say it's good for the most case it's always seen as bad. So, it's almost like... it's almost like you have a... you have an expert opinion.

Researcher: [00:25:10] So, overall you have talked quite a bit about the technical side of YouTube. Have you ever uploaded content onto YouTube?

Participant 2: [00:25:12] I have. Yes. Yes.

Researcher: [00:25:13] So you have seen the other side to YouTube being a creator and what it takes to increase popularity on YouTube?

Participant 2: [00:25:20] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:25:20] And are a lot of the things you have spoken about important to you when you create a video? For example, good thumbnail, audio and visuals?

Participant 2: [00:25:24] Yeah definitely... definitely.

Researcher: [00:25:25] Okay, I think that is about it. Thank you for your time.

Participant 2: [00:25:25] Perfect.

Figure 11:

Research Participant Three – Questionnaire Results

Q1 Do you watch YouTube?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q2 In a typical day about how many hours do you spend on YouTube?

8 Hours

Q3 Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

Phone, laptop and tv.

Q4 What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

___2___ Lifestyle

___3___ Gaming

___1___ Vlogs

___6___ Beauty

___7___ DIY

___5___ Comedy

___4___ Music

Q5 Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?

Yes

Q6 Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q6.B Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

YouTubers often make series of videos therefore multiple videos to watch.

Q7 Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered is I do not know what a YouTuber is

Q8 Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?

Yes

Q8.B Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

I feel that if a YouTuber were to promote an object/product or event, their viewers are more likely to buy or attend.

Q9 Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?

Yes

Q10 Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered No

Q10.B What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

A book, they recommended it and said that they enjoyed it so I wanted to read it.

Q11 Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?

- ___5___ Technological Developments
- ___1___ Personalities on YouTube
- ___4___ Content on YouTube
- ___3___ Accessibility to the Internet
- ___6___ Culture and Environment
- ___4___ Entertainment and Pleasure

Q12 Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube's popularity in the last 5 years

- ___3___ Technological advances
- ___1___ YouTube personalities (YouTubers)
- ___2___ Content on YouTube

Q13 What gender do you identify with?

Female

Q14 What age category do you fall into?

16 to 24

Figure 12:

Interview Questions – Research Participant Three

1. What type of videos do you like to watch on YouTube?
2. Why do you like this content?
3. Has your content preferences changed over time? How so?
4. What makes a YouTube video worth watching or enjoyable for you?
5. When you watch a video from a YouTuber that you are subscribed to, do you have expectation of their content?
6. Where do you watch YouTube and on what devices?
7. Are there times you would not watch certain YouTube content on a certain device or location?
8. What do you think the audience's role is in the YouTube industry?
9. Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTuber, if so what are they?
10. Do YouTubers need to have a personality to be successful on YouTube?
11. Could you name a few YouTubers that you watch regularly?
12. What attracts you to these YouTubers?
13. Out of these YouTubers, do you notice any similar personality traits or qualities?
14. Has your YouTuber preferences changed over time? How so?
15. How would you relate the two words YouTube and talent?
16. Would you class YouTubers as a celebrity?
17. How would you compare traditional celebrities, such as actors and singers, to YouTubers?
18. Where do you think the rise in YouTuber popularity has come from over the last few years?

Questionnaire Analysis

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

Figure 13:

Interview Transcript - Research Participant Three

Researcher: [00:00:02] So, what types of video do you like to watch on YouTube?

Participant 3: [00:00:06] Lifestyle and gaming.

Researcher: [00:00:10] And why do you like this sort of content?

Participant 3: [00:00:12] Lifestyle, because I like to see what people's lives are. Gaming, I'm a big gaming nerd. So, I like to watch people play their videos and then like I implement it into when I play my games.

Researcher: [00:00:26] Yeah and has your content preferences changed or stayed the same over the years of you watching YouTube?

Participant 3: [00:00:33] I say they've definitely changed, yeah, I definitely didn't watch lifestyle a lot when I was younger and now, as I've grown up, it's sort of interested me more.

Researcher: [00:00:42] Yeah okay. What makes YouTube video worth watching or enjoyable for you?

Participant 3: [00:00:48] Erm...if they're like funny and their content like grabs you. So, like if I find and watch a video and I'm not interested in the first minute or two I'm just like yeah no, not watching it, move on. But if it's funny and I am interested then I will continue watching it.

Researcher: [00:01:06] So what would make you click off? What would you what do you mean by not interesting?

Participant 3: [00:01:10] So if you're like... you click on it because of the title or the picture and you find that these might not actually related. Like clickbait but as title when it's nothing to do with the video, then I like wouldn't be interested in it or if it's like a topic that I thought I'd find interesting and then I'm not actually interesting.

Researcher: [00:01:34] So you don't like click bait?

Participant 3: [00:01:36] Yeah. No clickbait, hate... I hate it.

Researcher: [00:01:41] So when you watch a video from a YouTube video that you are subscribe to, do you have expectations of their content?

Participant 3: [00:01:47] Yeah, obviously having subscribe to them you have obviously have... must have watched a couple of videos of theirs before, so you kind of... if they're all the same you kind of have an expectation of what their... what their videos are gonna be like.

Researcher: [00:02:01] So if say, like you said before about a gamer, if they change the way they filmed their videos or do it in a different direction, how does that make you feel?

Participant 3: [00:02:11] I don't... it wouldn't affect me unless it was like they completely changed the game that they were playing, and that game didn't interest me. I wouldn't mind if like they changed... it's different like... they would have... like the way they filmed it was different it wouldn't matter if it was still the same content and I'd enjoy it.

Researcher: [00:02:30] Okay. Where do you watch YouTube and on what devices?

Participant 3: [00:02:34] I watch them at like home mainly in my room, on my phone but if I'm like in my living room with my housemates we watch it on the TV together.

Researcher: [00:02:43] So do you watch things together with people like socially then?

Participant 3: [00:02:46] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:02:46] Okay... are there certain times you would not watch a certain YouTube content on a certain device or location?

Participant 3: [00:02:54] Yeah, so there's a YouTuber that I watch who quite often swears in their video and I wouldn't watch that say in front of my parents or grandparents cause I feel it wouldn't be acceptable to watch around them.

Researcher: [00:03:07] Yeah. What do you think the audience role is in the YouTube industry?

Participant 3: [00:03:14] Ow that is a hard question. It's a big role, and like a YouTuber won't continue to do their job well... or do it if they don't have a big audience and quite often the audience will influence how... how they do their stuff. So, whether they do one type of video they do the other one.

Researcher: [00:03:39] So do you think YouTubers put out content because that's what they'd like to put out or do they put out content because that's what the audience wants?

Participant 3: [00:03:50] I think it's a bit of both. I feel like they might put out content say that... that's what they want to do, but then if they get comments to say 'oh we don't like this do something else' and they will do... they might often do that.

Researcher: [00:04:05] And would you say there are certain characteristics or attributes that attracts you to a YouTuber? And if so, what are they?

Participant 3: [00:04:11] Yeah, so like I said, like being funny and just having a nice personality like you can sort of tell somebody... how they are just by watching them so if they're like smiley, bubbly. I'd much rather watch that than somebody that's like monotone and not very entertaining.

Researcher: [00:04:33] Yeah. So, would you say you think that YouTubers need to have a personality to be successful on YouTube?

Participant 3: [00:04:40] Yeah definitely, it goes back to the...the question before, if they don't have a great personality if they're a bit like dull and boring then, then people aren't going to watch.

Researcher: [00:04:52] Yeah. What... so what does it mean to have a good personality? What... what traits are involved in someone that has a good personality?

Participant 3: [00:05:00] Happy and like you can tell if they're friendly or not by just the looks of them. So, I would say that's how.

Researcher: [00:05:08] Yeah. Could you name a few YouTubers that you watch regularly? Any is fine.

Participant 3: [00:05:18] Syndicate.

Researcher: [00:05:18] Yeah.

Participant 3: [00:05:19] He's a gamer. Then like the common ones like Zoella and Alfie... someone called Jazzybum.

Researcher: [00:05:28] What attracts you to these YouTubers? What is it about them?

Participant 3: [00:05:34] I dunno, like the gamers theirs... obviously the gaming. And also, like I like to see their lives and see how different, where they've got in their life like with their YouTube platform and see how the other life lives.

Researcher: [00:05:48] Yeah, and so thinking about the YouTubers that you just listed to me that you watch, do you notice that they have any similar personality traits?

Participant 3: [00:06:01] Yeah, there's... I feel like YouTubers in general all quite often have similar personalities. They're all very happy and bubbly. But I also feel like that can be just a show sometimes.

Researcher: [00:06:17] Yeah... so when they... these YouTubers, so you said Zoella and Alfie, when they're not happy and bubbly and you see that on their YouTube, on their content, how does that make you feel?

Participant 3: [00:06:31] Upset like what's happening like, are they okay? If they're upset why are they filming? Like I know they want to share their day, but like it could end up making other people upset.

Researcher: [00:06:48] Yeah. So, watching them showing the other side, would you say that makes them more authentic or less authentic.

Participant 3: [00:06:55] Definitely more authentic, because it's actually showing that they are still human.

Researcher: [00:07:01] Yeah, perfect. Similar to the question I asked you earlier about your content preferences. Has your YouTuber preferences changed... changed over time?

Participant 3: [00:07:25] I don't think so. I think I'll just stick with the same sort of thing.

Researcher: [00:07:28] Yeah that's fine. How would you relate the two words YouTuber and talent?

Participant 3: [00:07:35] This is a hard one because there's a lot of people on YouTube that are like not talented but then there's also the same, like you see major talented people.

Researcher: [00:07:46] Yeah so, the ones that you say are not talented, why they're not talented?

Participant 3: [00:07:50] They're just... well... some people would class them as not talented some people would. But it's like you can tell like... like if like somebody... like a singing that video and then just not very good at singing, I obviously won't tell them that they're not talented.

Researcher: [00:08:12] Yeah.

Participant 3: [00:08:13] But you can see they're not.

Researcher: [00:08:14] Yeah. So, what about if like, like you said like, obviously gaming it's easy to see if someone is not talented because they wouldn't win the game.

Participant 3: [00:08:21] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:08:22] So can you be a lifestyle vlogger and be not talented at that?

Participant 3: [00:08:26] I feel like you could because if it's not like other videos. But then obviously if you're just like new to it then you might not get it quite as well.

Researcher: [00:08:42] So someone successful that you mentioned earlier Zoella, is she talented?

Participant 3: [00:08:48] I'd say yeah. She's built like a really big industry just outside of her YouTube as well.

Researcher: [00:08:54] So what... what's her talent.

Participant 3: [00:08:57] I wouldn't know. I don't know.

Researcher: [00:09:06] That's part of the question. So, would you class YouTubers as celebrities?

Participant 3: [00:09:15] I Would. Yeah but also put them in a different category to other celebrities. So, like the celebrities that made their fame by like singing or acting like they're a different kind of celebrity.

Researcher: [00:09:31] Okay, are they more of a celebrity or less as a YouTuber? Are they higher or lower? Is that what you are trying to say?

Participant 3: [00:09:34] Yeah, I'd say like celebrities that have like made their fame like acting and that lot... like it's sort of like on a higher pedestal compared to YouTubers. And I'd feel, I feel like those... those celebrities wouldn't look at YouTubers as celebrities.

Researcher: [00:09:52] Because they're higher or?

Participant 3: [00:09:57] Erm... I don't know. I think I feel like some people wouldn't say that they were celebrities that they don't deserve the celebrity status because of what they do.

Researcher: [00:10:05] So would you, would you put actors up higher or lower and singer because they have a talent, they have something? They can sing?

Participant 3: [00:10:20] Yeah, higher yeah.

Researcher: [00:10:21] Yeah, that's fine. That's what you're answering. So, what about a YouTuber and a... a... someone who's been on a reality TV show. How would you rate them in relation to each other?

Participant 3: [00:10:34] I'd say they were like really on par, especially like vloggers cause that is like a reality show. Like although it's not it's like scripted reality, like most shows, it is still showing like day to day life. Like, Keeping up with the Kardashians. That's like their day to day life and like vloggers that their like day to day life as well.

Researcher: [00:10:54] So overall where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from? So, YouTubers were not even a thing a few years ago, it wasn't a thing to upload vlogs and game on YouTube. Whereas this will come from?

Participant 3: [00:11:08] Erm, I feel like some people just like... they started off like blogging, writing about it and then they got into the videos and then they've got partnership with companies and the company has promoted them. Therefore, they got a wider audience and that's how it has like grown.

Researcher: [00:11:26] Yeah, okay and how would you say you know content creators on YouTube started as bloggers and then got into videos?

Participant 3: [00:11:31] They talk about it all the time on their videos like... erm Zoella and people.

Researcher: [00:11:37] So I'm just gonna look at your questionnaire that you filled in earlier and ask you some questions about your answers. So, you put that you watch eight hours typically on YouTube a day. Was this eight hours all in one go or are there particular times that you watch more, like in the morning or in the afternoon or evening? How does this... how is this divided in your day?

Participant 3: [00:11:51] Definitely not in one go. Erm... it's periodically all over the day. Mainly, mostly at night. When I'm like... gone to bed I can't fall asleep, I'll watch YouTube and I'll spend hours.

Researcher: [00:12:05] What device will that be on when you watch it?

Participant 3: [00:12:06] A phone.

Researcher: [00:12:08] Uhm, okay. So, and in here you've put the categories of the YouTube that you watch, the top ones you put vlogs, lifestyle and gaming. What... what is it about these that you enjoy the most?

Participant 3: [00:12:23] I feel like vlogs and lifestyle it's like seeing somebody else's life. Just like seeing how they go about as well, and gaming obviously is that's something I'm interested in so that's why they're higher ranked.

Researcher: [00:12:42] And you said that you've commented on the YouTube video before.

Participant 3: [00:12:46] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:12:46] What did you comment or why do you comment?

Participant 3: [00:12:50] So is like often to like show that I've watched it and show that I've found the video interesting. Often asked a question or to show my support. Like, there's like one of my YouTubers recently their grandpa went into surgery, so I commented sending all my love life. It just shows support and... yeah.

Researcher: [00:13:15] Fine. Have you heard of a thing called a fandom?

Participant 3: [00:13:19] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:13:20] Are you part of any fandoms, would you say?

Participant 3: [00:13:25] I wouldn't, I don't know.... I don't know whether I'd like... the first selection of... like the YouTuber I watch for gaming; I don't know if I'd call it like the group of fans a fandom but definitely there's is groups of fans.

Researcher: [00:13:40] Yeah okay that is fine. So, in one of your last question you have put that the most... the most influential to least, the most important you put the personality on YouTube. Why do you think the personality is the most influential aspect for YouTube's popularity?

Participant 3: [00:14:00] Like if people have great personality and that they're like... really like... kind and have the persona of like being a nice person then it's often like people go 'oh have you seen this person they're really nice' and watch them. That's like... if that makes sense.

Researcher: [00:14:30] Yeah that does make sense. Let me just check to see if I have got everything. So, on one of your questions, you said that YouTubers often make series of videos and therefore they have multiple videos to watch. If a YouTuber is making the series and doesn't upload Part 3 shall we say to a series, how would you feel about that?

Participant 3: [00:14:55] It like... especially if it's like a story or something, like you could do like... like... a house tour, like renovations and this and then they just don't the show the final product, I would get a bit annoyed but then I understand that they have other commitments as well, like normal life. So, I wouldn't get too stressed.

Researcher: [00:15:20] And... out of audience, the content, the personalities and technology. So the audience being yourself, the people that watch, people that comment, the content being the type of video you watch and say gaming or a lifestyle video, the personality, being the person that is in front of the camera presenting themselves and technologies, being the camera that's used, the quality of the audio and the visual. What's most important to you?

Participant 3: [00:15:49] Content.

Researcher: [00:15:50] Then?

Participant 3: [00:15:52] Personality.

Researcher: [00:15:54] Then?

Participant 3: [00:15:54] Audience. Technology. See like people can put... like you do a video on a really bad quality camera or video but if it's like the content is like enticing and like... like you can sit and watch it without getting bored even if it's bad quality. It's still a decent video.

Researcher: [00:16:15] Because of the content?

Participant 3: [00:16:16] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:16:17] Yeah. Would you say any of them go hand in hand?

Participant 3: [00:16:23] Content and personality. Definitely. I feel like those two. If you don't have good personality and don't come across... like, I don't know how to explain it but if you if you've come across a bit like snobbish and a bit like you don't care you're just making videos because you can cause you know that you'll get an audience, make money off your content is not going to be as great, but if you have a great personality and you're making it because you want to make then your content is gonna be better.

Researcher: [00:16:55] Yes. So, you think the values of the person or the YouTube are quite important?

Participant 3: [00:16:59] Yeah definitely.

Researcher: [00:17:01] Okay, and how do you feel about sponsored videos?

Participant 3: [00:17:04] I feel like they're good but also sometimes they promote... video promote objects or products that they don't really know about, they're just promoting it because they're getting money.

Researcher: [00:17:21] So if you're go into your home page or your subscription box and you see that Zoella's done a sponsored video on and it says ad in the title. Are you less likely or more likely to click on it?

Participant 3: [00:17:33] I feel like I'd click on it anyway. But if it was something like that I wasn't really interested and like if they are promoting, like a weight loss thing, not that she would, and I feel that if she's promoting it then I'd be like, I'd click off cause that's not the not sort of video content that I'd watch or enjoy.

Researcher: [00:17:52] So you would click off the video and disregard the whole video as such?

Participant 3: [00:17:57] Yeah cause there's some things like sponsorship that I'm not interested in but if it's like subscription, like a meal subscription they're like making food then I'd like watch it because like oh maybe I could watch make that home.

Researcher: [00:18:14] Yeah that makes sense. Right, I think that's everything. Thank you for your time.

Figure 14:

Research Participant Four – Questionnaire Results

Q1 Do you watch YouTube?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q2 In a typical day about how many hours do you spend on YouTube?

4 Hours

Q3 Which devices/technology do you typically watch YouTube on? Please list as many as possible.

Tv- Sky and Laptop

Q4 What category of YouTube videos do you watch? Please rank for most watched to least.

___2___ Lifestyle

___3___ Gaming

___1___ Vlogs

___4___ Beauty

___6___ DIY

___5___ Comedy

___7___ Music

Q5 Have you ever commented on a YouTube video?

No

Q6 Do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTuber?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q6.B Why do you watch multiple videos from the same YouTubers?

I enjoy their content or it is part of a series so I continue watching.

Q7 Do you feel YouTuber have a significant voice in today's society?

Yes

Skip To: Q11 If you answered is I do not know what a YouTuber is

Q8 Do you feel YouTubers have an influence over their audience?

Yes

Q8.B Why do you think YouTubers do or do not influence their audience?

They sell merch and it gets sold out so they must have an influence.

Q9 Would you describe YouTubers as celebrities?

Yes

Q10 Have you ever purchased something because a YouTuber has featured, mentioned or advertised it?

Yes

Skip To: Q7 If you answered No

Q10.B What did your purchase and why do you think you have purchased something because of a YouTuber?

Make up and a game, looked good when they showed it.

Q11 Please rank, in the order of most influential to least, where do you think the rise in YouTube popularity has come from?

- ___1___ Technological Developments
- ___3___ Personalities on YouTube
- ___4___ Content on YouTube
- ___2___ Accessibility to the Internet
- ___6___ Culture and Environment
- ___5___ Entertainment and Pleasure

Q12 Please rate, in order 1 being most important 3 being least, what factors you feel have increased YouTube's popularity in the last 5 years

- ___1___ Technological advances
- ___3___ YouTube personalities (YouTubers)
- ___2___ Content on YouTube

Q13 What gender do you identify with?

Female

Q14 What age category do you fall into?

16 to 24

Figure 15:

Interview Questions – Research Participant Four

1. What type of videos do you like to watch on YouTube?
2. Why do you like this content?
3. How important, if at all, is it that the content you watch reflects your own lifestyle and is relatable to you?
4. What makes a YouTube video worth watching or enjoyable for you?
5. When you watch a video from a YouTuber that you are subscribed to, do you have expectation of their content?
6. Where do you watch YouTube and on what devices?
7. Are there certain times you watch more YouTube?
8. Are there times you would not watch certain YouTube content on a certain device or location?
9. Are there certain characteristics or attributes that attract you to a YouTube video, if so, what are they?
10. If a YouTuber you watch is upset or emotional about something, how does that make you feel?
11. Why do you feel this way?
12. Do you think that the audience and YouTuber have a relationship?
13. What does it mean to have a personality on YouTube?
14. How important, if at all, do you feel the audience is to the YouTube industry?
15. How important, if at all, is audience participation and interaction?
16. What do you think the influence of technology has on the YouTube industry?
17. Where do you think the rise in YouTuber popularity has come from?

Questionnaire Analysis

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions you would like to ask?

Figure 16:

Interview Questions – Research Participant Four Transcript

Researcher: [00:00:02] What type of videos do you like to watch on YouTube?

Participant 4: [00:00:05] So, I like to watch lots of vlog, like family vlogs and lifestyle videos mainly. But there's normally just like families that I watch the same people kind of over and over again.

Researcher: [00:00:18] Okay so people you are subscribe to?

Participant 4: [00:00:19] Yes.

Researcher: [00:00:20] Why do you like that kind of content?

Participant 4: [00:00:23] Well I've been following the family for a few years now so I kind of like to keep up to date and see what they're doing with their life and if they're moving and how the house is and just interested to see what they're doing and I suppose that lifestyle. Some things just interest me or similar to like what I'm doing... so it's like 'oh stationary or something' and I go to university so I want to see stationary for when I start my degree and things like that. So I just think it just applies to me.

Researcher: [00:00:51] OK, fair enough. You said that you've been following like the same families for like several years. Do you think their content have changed at all or do you think it's kind of stayed kind of similar?

Participant 4: [00:01:02] Their content has changed like recently the Sacconejolys... I watch... they have been posting for like seven years and like every day and they recently changed every other day. So... but their content is still the same they're still doing daily vlogs but they're just combine that into two days. But there was a bit of like an uproar about that because they've been doing the same thing for so long and they suddenly changed it. But to me I mean I don't, I'm not someone who goes up there on their channel... I like... I know when they upload at 6 o'clock but I'm not there at 6 o'clock like waiting for the upload. So, to me, it didn't really affect me because I'm still getting the same content, but obviously people are all waiting there and watch it day in day out probably would affect them all. But for me, it wasn't such a big thing.

Researcher: [00:01:46] Okay, that makes sense. How important, if at all, is it that the content that you watch reflects you own lifestyle and is it relatable to you?

Participant 4: [00:01:54] Erm... I'm not really sure about that like it's kind of to and to, like I was saying earlier like... I like to watch like things about stationary or something because I go to university and I need stationary but then who I watched the most is a family of vloggers and I don't have a family. I mean they have four kids six dogs. I don't have four kids and six dogs but they're still my favourite people to watch I suppose it's... I suppose it's more like, it doesn't reflect my lifestyle but that's maybe what I maybe aspire my lifestyle to be like that because they have this sort of glamorized life and they have a big house, what looks like a perfect family and everything, there is nothing wrong with any of them. So I suppose sometimes it does reflect

what I'm interesting into my lifestyle, but then I don't think that's is a necessarily necessary for me to enjoy the content.

Researcher: [00:02:45] OK. Would you say they are role models then?

Participant 4: [00:02:52] Yes I suppose so. I mean if they like did something bad like if they would drinking or something I wouldn't be like 'hh my God you're your role model. You shouldn't be doing that', but I just think, I just aspire their lifestyle I think someone... it's not necessary the person it's the life that they lead.

Researcher: [00:03:08] Right, OK. What makes each video worth watching or enjoyable for you?

Participant 4: [00:03:16] I think I don't like anything out the ordinary. I like it to be like content like I expect to see so, like the Sacconejolys, the family vlogger, I expect to see like a daily... a daily vlog or something of that sort. If they suddenly do something completely different, I wouldn't really enjoy that cause it's not what I expected to see. I think there needs to be like some upbeat, kind of feel to the video, I'm not going to sit there it's like a monotone nothing, just like boring. Yeah I think it's going to be the type of content that I'm interested in for me to enjoy it.

Researcher: [00:03:56] OK. So if the Sacconejolys uploaded a vlog that you found was dull and boring would you turn it off?

Participant 4: [00:04:05] I don't think I have ever... well the eight years they have uploaded them, I don't think I've ever found a vlog that is dull and boring. It's just, just their life. So, it's just... it's just they just do mundane things which is for some weird reason what I find interesting. So even, if they are doing boring things, I still find it interesting because them boring things, like them doing the washing up or something is what I have to do I suppose.

Researcher: [00:04:28] Okay, so you relate to it in that sense?

Participant 4: [00:04:29] Yeah and things that... when I see them doing chores, I mean that's not often because they have a maid, but people might be like you're just watching someone do the washing up, but to me for some reason I find that interesting.

Researcher: [00:04:39] OK. When you watch a video from YouTuber that you're subscribed to, do you have an expectation of the content? I know already kind of answer that question.

Participant 4: [00:04:48] Yeah. Yeah. So, like I said I do expect to see a similar sort of videos, similar style. Same with like... if it's like sit down, like someone sit down to a camera, I kind of expect like the background to be like neat and tidy because they always try and make the background look all nice and like the lighting as well quite bright. I wouldn't expect to turn on a video to someone sitting in a dark messy room talking to me, I'd expect it to be like quite flattering so that almost look at I would like... that would be my expectation. If I saw them like wearing a dirty shirt and sit in a dirty room just moaning and talking I think I'd be a bit like this is not what I expected and up a bit confusing and question the content.

Researcher: [00:05:38] Okay so it is almost quite formal quite put together?

Participant 4: [00:05:40] Yeah definitely.

Participant 4: [00:05:41] OK. Where do you watch YouTube and on what devices?

Participant 4: [00:05:46] So I mainly watched YouTube on my smart TV through sky in my bedroom as it has a big screen so it's better to watch. I don't really like to watch it on my phone cause the screen is really small and I can't really get into the content as well. Sometimes I'll watch it on my laptop like on a monitor, but still that's like sitting at my desk and I still feel that's quite formal I like to relax and watch it on the TV.

Researcher: [00:06:09] OK. Certain times you watch YouTube?

Participant 4: [00:06:14] Yeah, so I would like say normally when I'm in bed. So, because, obviously from the question before, I like to be like relax and just sit back and just enjoy and just know that I can sit there and not have to get up and just watch as much content as I want to.

Researcher: [00:06:30] OK. Are there certain times that you would not watch YouTube content on a certain device or location?

Participant 4: [00:06:36] Yes I like I said I wouldn't, I don't want to watch like YouTube on my phone or really through headphones. I just feel like you can't immerse yourself as much in it. Like the Sacconejolys, the family vlogger, I prefer to be able to sit down actually watch that properly, not watching it halfheartedly on my phone like on a bus or something. I like to just sit down, just give it my undivided attention.

Participant 4: [00:07:00] OK. Are there certain characteristics or attributes that you, that attract you to a YouTube video? If so, what are they? I know you've roughly kind of explain that. Can you give them more detail?

Participant 4: [00:07:10] Yeah. So, I think they need to have like... a have like... something about they, need to have a good personality and be kind of like bubbly and upbeat. But also, not fake, not over exaggerate their personality too much cause I think that can just, that makes me feel like the whole content is fake as well as their person... their personality. I just think they just need to be happy and enjoy what they are doing because that makes me enjoy watching what they're doing.

Researcher: [00:07:42] Okay. And if you, you just said about them being happy, if you watch a YouTuber who is upset or emotional about something, how does that make you feel?

Participant 4: [00:07:51] I think that, it depends on the YouTuber and the person. Cause like if it's someone I've watched for a long time like the Sacconejolys, if they're upset, then I relate myself more to them because I've watched them over the years. Like they had a miscarriage for a baby and they did a video about it and it was really upsetting seeing their raw emotions that made me quite upset. But if it's someone who I... like a channel that I flick in and out of, I might find it upsetting but I might not necessarily get upset myself. I think it depends on the relationship or you kind of have with YouTuber and how long you been watching, how well you know them.

Researcher: [00:08:32] Ok that makes sense. The next question is why do you feel this way but I think you kind of just covered that. Do you think that the audience and YouTuber have a relationship?

Participant 4: [00:08:44] Yes I suppose, its weird cause I just said that it depends on the relationship you have with the YouTuber, but it's... like I have a relationship with them, but they don't even know I exist. So, it's kind of it's weird.

Researcher: [00:08:59] It's like a one-way relationship?

Participant 4: [00:09:00] Yeah. So I could say like I had this relationship where I feel their emotions but it's not like they even know who I am. I'm just like a number to them. So, I dunno, it's really weird. I just feel like it's something that's I've built up over time. If you've watched it for a long time, you... I feel like I know them, so I feel like if anything goes, it's like a friend, like I know everything about them, or as much as they let me see, so when they feel emotions I'm like 'oh I know how hard they tried for a baby and how long they've been waiting for' and so I get really upset with them like when they lost their baby.

Researcher: [00:09:32] Okay makes sense. What does it mean to have a personality on YouTube?

Participant 4: [00:09:39] I think having a personality is like having like a charisma and standing out against other people. Just like when you meet someone like at a party or something, it's that person that stands out against everyone else. I think that's what you need on YouTube. There's a lot of content out there and you need to have this sort of personality and charisma about you that differentiates you from everyone else.

Researcher: [00:10:03] Okay. How important, if at all, do you feel the audience is to the YouTube industry?

Participant 4: [00:10:14] I feel that the YouTube industry obviously has to rely on the audience, cause if there's no audience then there wouldn't be any YouTube because no one be watching. But then I feel like sometimes, they like YouTube as a general, they don't really... their main concern is not the audience, cause I mean sometimes I'm subscribed to loads people, but YouTube won't put them in my subscription box. Like they're more... they're more worried about the algorithm and things going on behind the scenes and kind of making money. But I feel like the YouTubers themselves they... they care about the audience some more because if they didn't have the audience then they wouldn't have a channel. So I think they try to put off that their audience is more important than they actually are to them.

Researcher: [00:11:08] Yeah. So do you think the audience would have some sort of like saying in what kind of content is produced?

Participant 4: [00:11:16] I think somewhat. I mean at the end of the day the YouTuber is not going to or shouldn't put out content that they don't enjoy making and they don't like because that comes across in their videos. But also if the audience didn't like it and didn't watch and they didn't get a lot of views then they're not going to redo that video cause they're not going to make any money or earn anything from them and they're probably going to lose subscribers. So, I think they like go hand in hand.

Researcher: [00:11:41] Okay. So you just mentioned how important audience participation is. What do you think about audience interaction?

Participant 4: [00:11:52] I've never really like interacted or anything with a video or even like commented or anything like that. Like at the end of some videos, YouTubers like ask for you to leave comments or suggestions and stuff and I might read through them myself to find out where something is from or something like that, but I don't, I don't necessarily comment or would have commented myself. I think YouTubers do kind of rely on the comments section to find out if people enjoyed it or like people liking their videos. I have liked to video before. I suppose that's like anonymous I don't really want people see me commenting on videos, I suppose that's like a personal preference. But I think they rely on it somewhat but it's as... long as they're getting the views the comments not necessarily that important. I mean sometimes they turn them off so they can't be that important to them.

Researcher: [00:12:46] OK, yeah. What do you think the influence of technology has been on the YouTube industry?

Participant 4: [00:12:53] I think that the technology is like a major influence. I think without the technology that we have now YouTube wouldn't be as big as it was because it's about people like, like... if I can't watch it on my TV then I don't think I'd watch as much because I don't want to sit around on like a little screen or a little laptop or computer sitting up watching YouTube for ages and I'd maybe watch like a ten minute video but I wouldn't watch any of the longer videos like say 40 minutes just sitting at my desk. So, I think the advances and also like, if the Internet was really slow, then I'd get fed up of watching videos because I'd just be waiting for it to buffer. So, I mean, I remember when I was younger, we'd sit down and wait for it all to load and then it would still a buffer you just end up getting annoyed and just clicking off. So I think that is a really important role because without the technology YouTube literally wouldn't exist or wouldn't be as popular as it is now.

Researcher: [00:13:51] Okay so you think it was more accessible?

Participant 4: [00:13:54] Yeah definitely having access to YouTube and even the Internet has... is what made... has made YouTube as big as it is.

Researcher: [00:14:01] Okay. So that kind of answers the second question. Where do you think the rise in YouTuber popularity has come from? Do you think that's technology or do you think YouTubers can get their fame another way?

Participant 4: [00:14:16] I think the technology has enabled them to get their popularity. If they, if there was no technology, if there's no cameras and they couldn't plug the camera into the computer to upload them then they wouldn't have created their... a YouTuber wouldn't be a thing because the YouTubers is like a celebrity on YouTube. So, without the technology to access YouTube, there wouldn't be such things as a YouTuber. So. I think they rely a lot more on technology and advances in the Internet and stuff more than we realise because without it the YouTubers and online celebrities generally it wouldn't be a thing.

Researcher: [00:14:53] OK. So just looking at your questionnaire you went over, you answered in question four that vlogs and lifestyle are what you watch most and I know you've quickly kind of answered this but why do you think those are the most interesting to you over beauty or comedy?

Participant 4: [00:15:14] I think vlogs and lifestyle, it's kind of like what people are doing day to day, their day to day lives. Like makeup and beauty, I don't really wear makeup like that often, I mean sometimes I will and so sometimes I'll watch videos but like people's lifestyles and filming what they do day to day, I mean I do things day today and I like to be nosy and see what other people are doing so I suppose it just yeah being nosy looking at what people do day to day and compared and comparing it's to what I do daily.

Researcher: [00:15:40] OK. Question eight, you said that YouTubers sell merch and it get sold out so they must have some sort of influence. Why do you think YouTubers choose to sell merch?

Participant 4: [00:15:50] I think from like looking in the comments sections and things, there's like this group of people that just demand things from YouTubers, they want to show their support. So, YouTubers create this sort of merch and then people buy it to show their support even if it's like, I dunno, cause merch doesn't really appeal to me. People just have like tops with YouTubers names on it and I'm just like I don't really understand. I don't understand why you'd want a top with someone's... someone's name across it. Yeah, I suppose that doesn't really appeal to me. It seems like a lot is... a lot more of what the younger audience is, like fan girl over the YouTubers, whereas that's not really me, I'm just interested in what they're doing. I'm not obsessed with them or anything.

Researcher: [00:16:40] Okay. In question eleven you put technological developments and accessibility to the Internet as your most important to be that influential.

Participant 4: [00:16:53] Yeah.

Researcher: [00:16:54] Why do you think you put culture and environment last?

Researcher: [00:16:59] Similar to what I said before, I think like technology and access to the Internet is such a big role in in the YouTube industry because literally without it wouldn't exist. If like, if people weren't interest in and like the culture wasn't like such around like watching YouTube videos or DIY video on YouTube, it wouldn't be as popular, but it would still be... it would still be able to exist.

Researcher: [00:17:24] OK, I see. Do you think that if YouTube, if people around you didn't watch YouTube, your friends and family didn't watch it, do you think you would still?

Participant 4: [00:17:35] Now I've watched it and know about it I would because I don't... a lot my family doesn't really watch YouTube, they don't understand it, my friends watch completely different YouTube to what I do. So, I think I would still... I would still watch. I mean I started watching YouTube because of one of my friends, so maybe I wouldn't have started to watch and I wouldn't know about it. But I think it would still exist and it would still be there maybe just wouldn't be as popular.

Researcher: [00:18:00] Okay. Thank you.