


Chapter 5


Content Creators or Careless Curators? The Rise of YouTubers and Its Impact on Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at analyzing the relationships between YouTubers and Generation Z in India and the effects of YouTubers including the positive and negative aspects. The case study reveals that Gen Z could not afford to lose YouTubers as they play a critical role in educating, entertaining, and connecting young people. In particular, the platform's contribution to making education more accessible and spreading community feel among young Indians cannot be overlooked. However, this study also shows the negative characteristics, such as the distribution of fake news, bullying, and consumerism. This article analogizes these problems and presents examples from the Indian experience for comparison with the tendencies in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the profile of Gen Z in India is vital because the demographic comprises nearly 472 million people born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s,

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who have been subjected to a myriad of internet and mobile technologies. (Hameed & Mathur, 2020). They have been brought up this way, and according to a survey, more than half of Gen Z in India have access to Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, as they are their preferred choice for on-demand content. (Kumar & Mathew, 2023). Studies indicate that a typical Generation Z user spends more than six hours a day on their mobile phones, which makes the highly fluid and flexible nature of the YouTube platform suitable for the generation. (Chandhok & Nithya, 2019; Cismariu et al., 2019; Kang, 2022; Zhitomirsky-Geffet & Blau, 2016).

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in the number of YouTubers and viewers in India. (Avinaash & Jayam, 2019; Lowe et al., 2019). Bidav and Mehta, (2024) reveal that the Indian YouTube creators had made a direct impact of 6,800 crore on the Indian GDP in 2020, and there existed 6,83,900 full-time equivalent jobs. The report also stresses a significantly impressive rise in the number of YouTube channels that have over one million subscribers, with only 20 such channels in 2016, while in 2020, such channels were over 4,500 (Bidav & Mehta, 2024).

This paper identifies some forces that have led to the exponential growth of the YouTube community, namely, the increasing internet access in India (Avinaash & Jayam, 2019). According to Malhotra et al. (2021), the number of active internet users in India is expected to rise from 600 million in 2020 to 900 million by 2025. The availability of inexpensive data plans from telecommunication firms has also advanced this growth, as they have provided the majority of the population with a chance to access online content affordably (Colohan et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2022).

The huge viewer base of YouTube in India has led to the production of more content, which has encouraged new YouTubers to want to create content since the platform is fairly easy to use and can go viral (Ilangovan et al., 2021; Prachi et al., 2024). The realisation of content creation has led to the development of a new paradigm of the influencer's role; YouTubers are not only entertainers but also experts, opinion-makers, and examples for Generation Z (del Pilar Gutiérrez Arenas et al., 2022a; Martínez-Sanz, 2021; Weerasinghe & Wijethunga, 2022).

Since entertainment and advertisement have merged, there is a need to closely examine the role which YouTubers play in shaping the consumption patterns and contributing to the personal development of Generation Z (Park & Chun, 2020). As YouTubers occupy an important position in the lives of the Indian Gen Z audience, this paper analyses the various implications of YouTube content. We discuss the benefits, which are skill development and community formation, as well as the limitations, which are the inaccuracy of content and irresponsible behaviour. Analysing these aspects will help to explain the interconnection between YouTubers and Gen Z viewers in India.

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