

VIDEO FIRST

making an impact



SOPHIE CHALK

ibt

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
FINDINGS	3
REFERENCES	13

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About IBT

IBT (The International Broadcasting Trust) is an educational charity working to promote high quality media coverage of the wider world. Our aim is to further awareness and understanding of the lives of the majority of the world's people and the issues which affect them.

IBT regularly publishes research and organizes events to encourage a greater understanding of the role the media plays in engaging people in the UK with the rest of the world. We are a membership-based organisation. If you are interested in joining please see our website www.ibt.org.uk

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FOREWORD

We live in what's been called a 'video first' world. If you go online, on your smartphone or computer, you're increasingly likely to watch video rather than read an article, and the social media platforms are actively promoting video over text.

The rapidly changing media landscape presents huge challenges for media organisations and, arguably, even greater challenges for NGOs. Organisations that want to reach audiences need to produce their own video content. But it's a crowded and competitive space.

And there are major challenges. The algorithms used by Facebook and other platforms ensure that more sensational content is promoted because it provokes stronger reactions. This poses a particular challenge for those who want to produce content that is not sensational.

In this report we examine how video is viewed online, what works and what doesn't, what the latest trends are and we look at some key lessons for NGOs wishing to produce their own content.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the current media landscape in the UK, the trends which are influencing it and explores how video is viewed online, what works and what doesn't and where the opportunities lie for NGOs wishing to produce their own video content.

Greater choice of where and how to access the internet is increasing the use of online services. All organisations wishing to communicate with audiences are having to reinvent their communication models to ensure they provide the content people want to watch and read on the platforms and devices where they want to access it.

Video is growing exponentially and much of it is now viewed on mobile phones, and there's a growing generation gap with young people watching less live TV and consuming more online video.

Consumption of news is changing significantly. As demand for newspapers declines, so there's a growing demand for news via social media platforms. Facebook is by far the most important platform for consuming and sharing news.

Social media platforms are driving the consumption of video. The key difference between traditional broadcasting and social media platforms is the algorithms which determine how content is prioritised. It's a highly competitive space and producers need to know who they are targeting and what that audience will respond to.

Facebook, YouTube and the other online platforms prioritise content according to a system of computer algorithms. They do this to ensure that their platforms deliver content to users which they want to see, based on their previous choices and those of their friends. The prioritisation of content is fundamental to their operating models: if users enjoy their visit, they will stay longer and they will return.

A consequence of algorithms is that more sensational content is promoted because it provokes stronger reactions. This poses a particular challenge for organisations which want to publish content that is not sensational.

There are different ways of measuring impact and engagement. Many of our interviewees had cautionary advice about chasing shares and likes, although they all believe that understanding your metrics and data are essential if you are to be successful.

There are some key lessons from this report for NGOs wishing to produce their own online video content. It's essential to start from the perspective of what your target audience will be interested in. Segment your audience. Study the data gathered from previous campaigns and utilise it to understand what works and what doesn't. Think about what will motivate people to watch and share your video. Allow and encourage a conversation. Keep experimenting to find out what works for your audience and what doesn't.

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In July 2016 Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg made an announcement: *We see a world that is video-first with video at the heart of all our apps and services. We're going to become video first¹* and by 2020 Cisco predicts that 82 per cent of all consumer internet traffic will be video.

Technological change has led to a disruption of the media model that has dominated for decades in which print media, television and radio were our main sources of information about what was going on in the world. The latest data shows that some of us now spend more time on media and communications than we do sleeping.²

This report aims to set out the current media landscape in the UK, the trends which are influencing it and to explore in more detail how video is viewed online, what works and what doesn't and where the opportunities lie for NGOs wishing to produce their own video content.

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The most significant development in the media landscape has been greater choice of where and how to access the internet which is increasing the use of online services, including video. With nine out of ten adults in the UK going online every day, being 'connected' is viewed as a core part of many people's daily lives.³ Watching video online has increased exponentially, much of it now on mobile phones. As a result,

all media organisations and others wanting to communicate with audiences are having to reinvent their communication models to ensure that they provide the content people want to watch and read on the platforms and devices where they want to access it. This is a huge challenge for media organisations and, arguably, an even greater one for NGOs.

Here, in brief, are some current trends in the UK:

- Live TV viewing has declined in favour of time-shifted, online free and paid-for video content.
- Print media has declined in popularity.
- News video is becoming more common but is still less popular than text.
- More people are watching video on their mobile phones.
- Fewer people are using desktop computers. Tablets and mobiles are no longer supplementing PCs and laptops, but they are replacing them.
- A generation gap has evolved with younger people using mobile devices and social media and older people retaining more traditional habits.

TV versus online video

As can be seen from Figure 1, live TV is still the dominant force in video consumption but online viewing and on-demand subscription TV is on the rise among younger audiences.

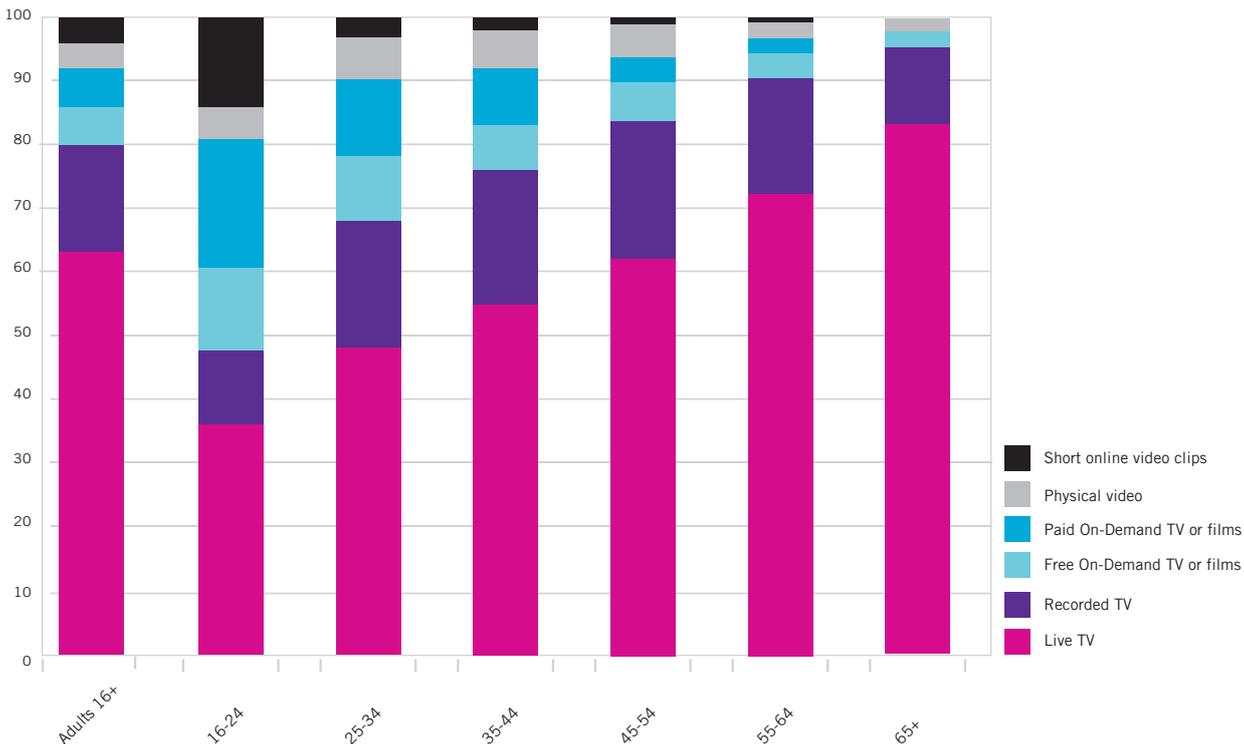


Figure 1: Proportion of time spent watching video attributed by age group⁴

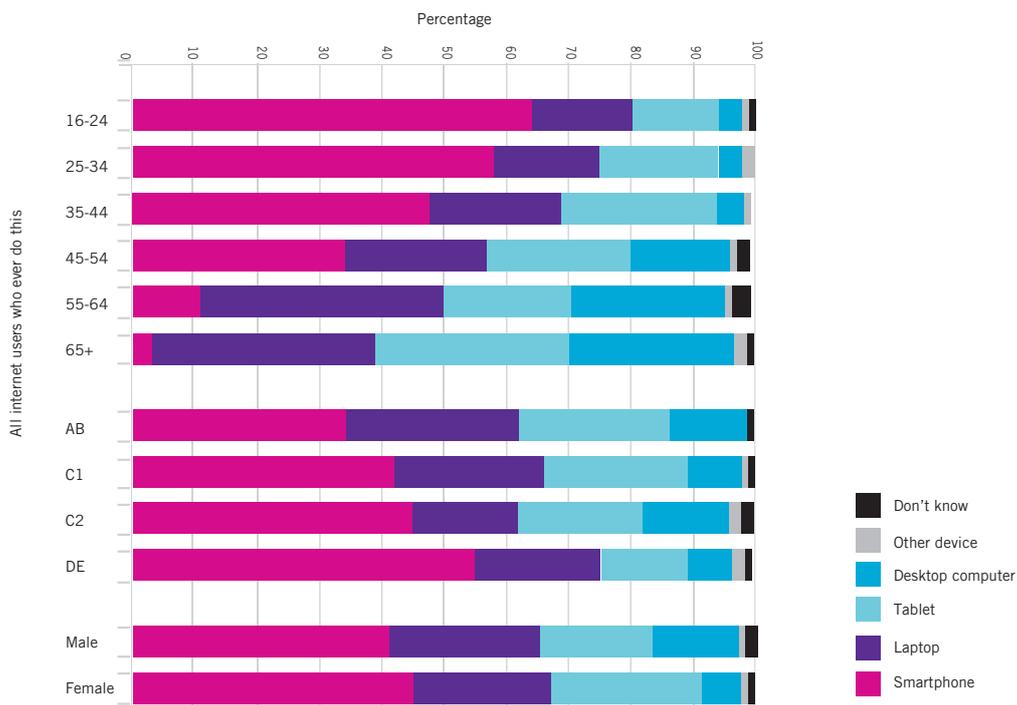


Figure 2: Device most used for watching short video clips online ⁷

Generation gap

One of the most striking trends that can be seen in Figure 1 is the growing gap between the generations. Younger people, those aged 16-34, are watching less live TV, consuming more online video, using their mobile phones more and seven out of ten of them watch on-demand content on services such as BBC iPlayer, All 4, Netflix or Amazon. The average weekly reach of broadcast TV is 82% among those aged 16-24, compared to 97% for adults aged 65 and older.⁵ One of the key benefits of online video is that it reaches a younger audience.

Devices people are using to go online and watch video content

More people are using the internet to access video content. Four out of five have watched a short video clip online, with around half doing so weekly.⁶ Video content is watched on a range of devices as can be seen in Figure 2. Watching video clips is most commonly done on a smartphone, particularly among younger adults. Laptops/netbooks are the devices used most often for watching TV or films online.

Video uptake online has been driven largely by improving mobile data networks, cheaper data packages and faster broadband. Online platforms promote native video because it keeps users on their sites longer. They are constantly evolving their offering to enable greater immersion and introducing new video services to attract users, including live video, VR and 360 video. Live 360 will be launching imminently.

Apps versus websites

The majority of people who watch video on their mobiles prefer to use apps to do so⁸ but older users prefer using a browser.⁹ Nathalie Malinarich says that while the BBC News app attracts fewer people

than the BBC website, the app users are more loyal and engaged: *If you've chosen to download an app and use it the likelihood is you have a more direct relationship with that news organisation.*

News consumption

The way people consume news in the UK has changed significantly in the past five years. The popularity of newspapers has declined and there has been growing demand for news via social media platforms. However this is one of the only areas where online video isn't growing as fast as expected.¹⁰ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's *Digital News Report 2016* found that only 22% of those surveyed in the UK use online video news in a given week.¹¹

As can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, the BBC remains the dominant news provider in the UK, on both online and broadcast platforms. Most of the BBC's online users (70%) say that it is their main online news source.¹⁴ Also noteworthy is the growth of relatively new digital platforms, such as BuzzFeed and the Huffington Post, both of which have hired UK staff.

Facebook is by far the most important platform for consuming and sharing news. According to Alex Krasodonski-Jones, Researcher at the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at Demos, this trend is increasingly blurring the lines between traditional news and personal news: *The currency of news – what makes something newsworthy – has changed in the past decade. Before you would have gauged how important a story was by its position in a paper – is it on the front page, who has published it, who wrote the article? Now the currency of news is clicks, likes, shares, comments, popularity or outrage.*

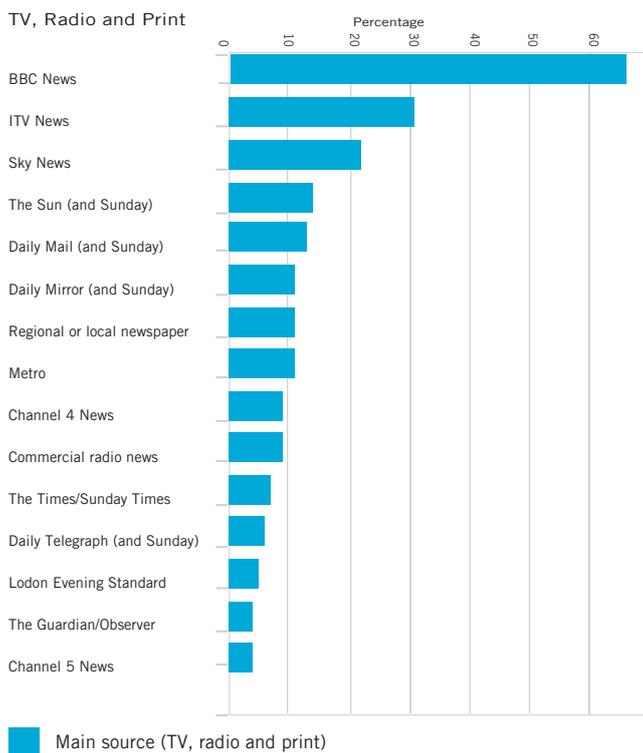


Figure 3: UK weekly news consumption online¹²

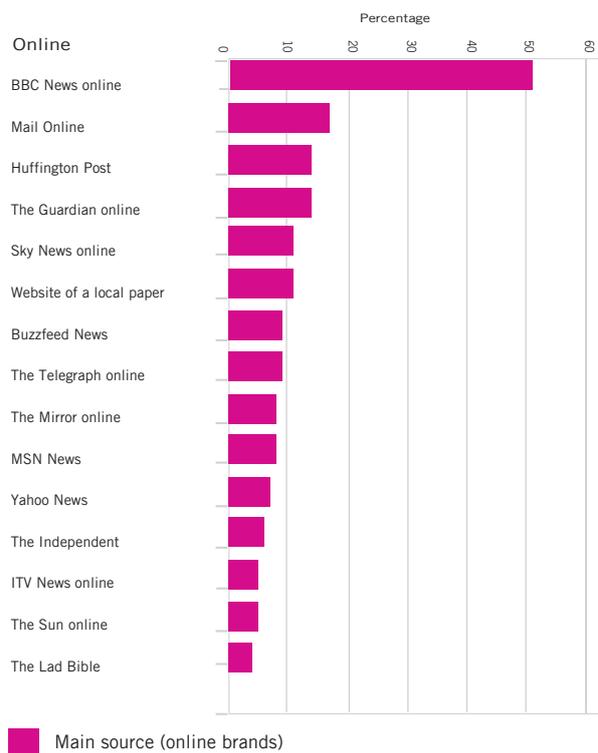


Figure 4: UK weekly news consumption, TV, radio, print¹³

What makes traditional TV different from online video

Traditional TV schedules are designed to achieve reach while providing a range of content for different audiences at varying times of the day. They are devised by commissioners and schedulers and audiences are subject to their tastes, creative decisions and curation of content. The traditional TV model expects audiences to sit back and watch.

For online video to achieve impact a completely different approach is needed. This is a crowded space with a surfeit of content: 400 hours of video are uploaded each minute onto YouTube. If a viewer isn't instantly grabbed by content he or she will move onto something else. Andy Taylor of Little Dot Studios, an online broadcaster and producer, highlights how much more competitive it is to attract audiences online: *It's just so much harder to get seen and to keep the viewer. When I'm watching on YouTube I've got an email just come in and an alert just come in. I can go on Facebook and I've got so much to do. If you don't smack the viewer over the head in the first five seconds, they're gone. They're busy, they're not there to sit back.*

Producers now need to know specifically who they are targeting and what that audience will respond to. Steve Wheen of online social video producer The Distillery says the change in the way audiences view content is challenging producers to work in a different way: *I think it's making people tell stories in a slightly different way. It's making people think a lot more about their audiences. We tell stories in different ways for different brands. And then we tell those stories differently on different platforms.*

The influence of social media on video consumption

Social media platforms are driving the consumption of video. The key difference between traditional broadcasting and social media

platforms is the algorithms which determine how content is prioritised. There isn't an editor deciding what is important, it is your previous choices and the popularity of content, measured by shares, likes and comments, which will determine what users see. This is a dramatic change in how content is presented. Understanding algorithms is crucial for any video producer wishing to reach a wide audience.

Distributed content

Increasingly the role of traditional websites is declining as more content is distributed via social media platforms. Brands like Vox, BuzzFeed and Vice are exploring what content distribution looks like without a website at its centre.¹⁵ The challenge this poses is that when content is distributed via other platforms publishers lose control of how it is viewed because of algorithms. There is an opaqueness and unpredictability about how these algorithms, controlled by tech companies and driven by commercial profit, operate and they change constantly. They are also creating echo chambers and leading to strong confirmation bias because they serve new content based on previous preference.

Fake news and polarisation

The British Oxford Dictionary made "post-truth" its word of the year in 2016. It defines it as: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."¹⁶

The deliberate manufacturing of news stories to amuse or mislead is nothing new, but the speed of social media sites means that nowadays lies can spread half way round the world before anyone can think to challenge them. The sharing of

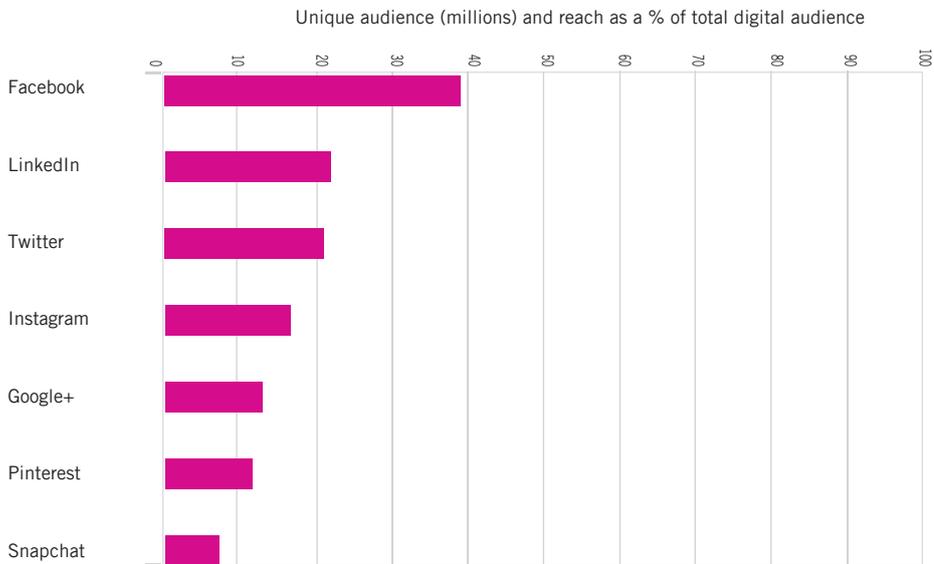


Figure 5: Digital audience of selected social networks ¹⁷

content also leads to allegations or comments being escalated into ‘facts’ as they spread before they have been confirmed. The algorithms used by platforms prioritise the most shared, liked or commented on content. This tends to be that which is extreme because it creates the most reaction therefore the more sensational the story, the greater the financial benefit for the platforms. However, it seems likely that platforms will increasingly be required to play a more active role in policing fake news.

One probable impact of fake news is that recognised news providers will become more important because they are trusted and tend to follow the same editorial standards online as they do in their main output whether that is TV or print or radio.

Future trends

- It will be increasingly difficult to have an impact with online video as more and more video is posted.
- Organic reach for online video, ie for content which is not paid for, will continue to decline so increasingly publishers will have to pay or be very clever with their strategy if they are to be noticed.
- Brand awareness will be lower as content is increasingly accessed via social media rather than from a branded website.
- In an ever-connected world there are signs that people are suffering from internet overload. Companies are running email management courses and digital detox and internet free holidays are becoming more popular.
- Online video could cannibalise TV audiences further.
- Social and political polarisation are likely to increase as a result of social media users’ echo chambers which will present a challenge for the content which is in the ‘middle ground’.

ONLINE VIDEO PLATFORMS

Analysts describe 2016 as the year that social video really took off. Live streaming services, vertical video and silent autoplay have become mainstream. Storytellers now rely more on large text overlays than voiceovers; virtual reality, augmented reality, 4K, and 360-degree video are becoming more commonly seen in newsfeeds. The power of video, often edited with music

to engage, entertain and inform users means that it is now becoming the most shared content on social platforms.

Most popular social media sites among UK users

As can be seen from Figure 5, Facebook continues to be the most popular social network in the UK. In April 2016, it attracted a digital audience of 38.9 million (more than three-quarters of active internet users). Most social media use is on mobile and according to Ofcom on average we spend 1 hour 48 minutes on social networks a day.¹⁸

Most popular video sharing sites among UK users

Looking at online video sharing sites, YouTube has the largest digital audience in the UK, at 41 million in March 2016 (an active reach of 82% across the total digital audience)¹⁹. Its audience on mobiles and tablets was larger than on laptops and desktops. Vimeo had the second largest unique audience of 28.4 million and, as with YouTube, its reach was higher on mobile devices.

Which platforms are best for targeting different age groups and genders?

Younger people are more likely to watch short video clips online and adults in the C1 socio-economic group are more likely than all adults to have ever watched videos on YouTube (78% versus 72%).²⁰

Compared to all adults with a social media profile, 16-24 year olds are more likely to have a profile on Instagram (47%), WhatsApp (39%), Twitter (38%), Snapchat (37%) and YouTube (36%). This age group is less likely to have a profile on LinkedIn (8% vs. 14%).²¹

The DCMS Taking Part Survey 2016 shows that most sites are used more by men than women, with the exception of Instagram and Facebook which attract more female users.²²

WHAT WORKS BEST ON EACH PLATFORM

According to Tubular Labs, which uses bespoke software to track video content across platforms and devices globally, children’s content, food and 360 video will all be on the rise on social media platforms in 2017. News, animals, entertainment, ‘how to’ videos and heart warming stories all continue to perform well.

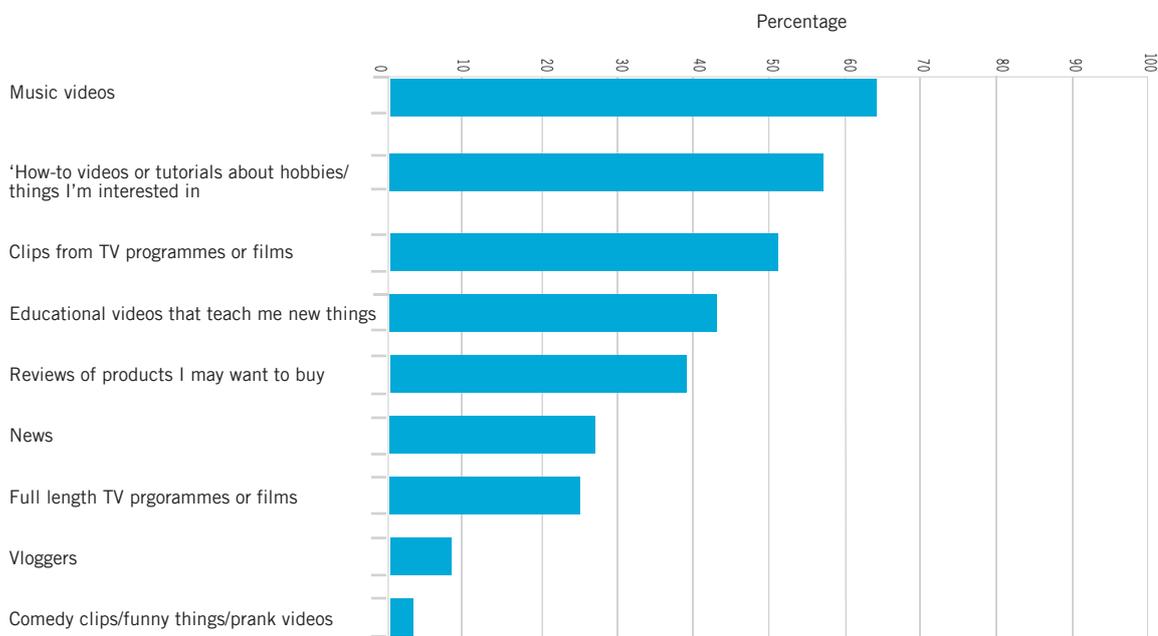


Figure 6: The type of content viewed on YouTube²³

YouTube

Figure 6 shows the most popular type of content watched on YouTube. Figure 7 shows the most successful content creators on YouTube. Although entertainment dominates, there have been some notable successes for non profits. Save the Children's *Most Shocking Second a Day*²⁵ has had 56 million views. It is beautifully shot and imagines what the life of a British girl would be like if she suddenly became a refugee, placing the experience of someone in the UK at the heart of the issue. WaterAid has successfully used humour. Its spoof video for men's sanitary products, *Manpons*²⁶, has had more than 2 million views. It is well produced, successfully mimicking a TV ad and links to other videos in their #ifmenhadperiods series.

Facebook

As Figure 8 shows, publishers which put up funny, heartwarming, entertainment videos lead the way.

Rank	Name	Views
1	Ed Sheeran	642,232,923
2	DisneyCARS	367,149,678
3	LittleBabyBum™	353,211,646
4	Toys and Me	288,382,182
5	Dan TDM	239,786,381
6	Emily Tube	221,770,073
7	Clean Bandit	166,757,710
8	SevenSuperGirls	157,809,818
9	littlemixVEVO	149,484,248
10	NoCopyrightSounds	131,055,198
11	Coldplay	127,917,788
12	Adele	118,596,306
13	DisneyJuniorUK	84,774,518

Figure 7: Top YouTube publishers in the UK, February 2017²⁴

Despite the dominance of entertainment there is space for news and other serious content. *Channel 4 News* has been particularly successful, making content that is specific to Facebook rather than just recycling reports from the TV programme. Its *Children of Aleppo* video has had 68 million views.²⁸

Another video which bucked the entertainment trend was the BBC World Service's *This is how to charge your phone with a mud oven* which has had over 23 million views.²⁹ According to Tubular Labs³⁰ climate change is a topic that does well on Facebook.

An NGO campaign which broke through was the DEC Nepal video fronted by Daniel Craig in 2015.³¹ Steve Wheen of the Distillery who produced the video says tracking its performance was crucial in making sure it achieved reach. Shortly after it was posted they found that it wasn't doing as well as expected and that viewing was dropping

Rank	Name	Views
1	UNILAD	3,143,739,756
2	The LAD Bible	2,949,933,883
3	Viral Thread	2,324,085,555
4	Daily Mail	1,068,589,779
5	The SPORT Bible	491,296,795
6	Pretty 52	487,741,437
7	BBC News	265,321,386
8	People Are Awesome	238,437,096
9	Liam Dineen	235,277,113
10	Game On	204,365,582
11	Food Envy	197,310,901
12	Milo Yiannopoulos	173,665,659
13	Student Problems	173,423,349

Figure 8: Top UK content creators on Facebook, February 2017²⁷

off at a certain point, so they re-edited it and its performance improved.

Facebook Live

In an effort to compete with other live video social platforms Facebook is promoting its Facebook Live service. This means that all live content is prioritised in newsfeeds. Audiences of Live videos watch for an average three times longer than audiences for normal videos which is why Facebook is incentivising producers to go Live.³²

During 2016 the top performing Live feeds were dominated by the US elections but none of them got close to the video which was posted by Candace Payne and featured *Chewbacca Mom* in which a woman who bought a Star Wars Chewbacca mask couldn't stop laughing while she tried it on. It attracted 166 million views.³³

According to Tubular Labs, Live video on Facebook is generating the most engagement among users. A number of international development charities, including Oxfam and the DEC, feature their live videos on their Facebook pages. Uses of live streamed content on Facebook include Q&A sessions, behind the scenes videos, interviews, demos, how to's, challenges and breaking news. In order to succeed with live, however, you need to ensure you market the event among your supporters, you have the appropriate equipment to film and stream and you plan any calls to action. The optimum length of a live video on Facebook at the moment is 20 minutes. After filming your live event you can archive it on your Facebook page and it's estimated that two thirds of viewing of live video is carried out once it is archived.

Vimeo

Vimeo doesn't have the millions of users or the high-profile status of YouTube but it does have groups of loyal viewers and creators who tend to post and search for higher quality content. According to Ofcom it is the second most popular online video site in the UK.

The site stresses that it is curated by humans and not an algorithm. Videos are listed under curated picks and genres such as comedy, documentary, journalism, fashion, food and travel. A notable film in the documentary category is the *New York Times* video *4.1 Miles* which tells the story of a Greek coastguard tasked with helping bring refugees to safety. The 20 minute film has had 324,000 views and was nominated for an Academy Award.³⁴

Instagram

Videos can be up to 60 seconds long. Instagram appeals to a younger audience and has one of the highest engagement levels of any social media platform. Most content is subtitled to allow users to watch with the sound turned off on a mobile. Many international NGOs post photographs which project more positive aspects of development, often focusing on individuals

in well-framed, high quality stills which humanise the stories behind the headlines. Few are currently posting video.

Media companies such as BuzzFeed, AJ+, *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* all post videos alongside stills. BBC News uses Instagram to provide visually dramatic content which is not headline news. A recent post showed footage of a woman escaping a landslide in Peru and had 183,000 views.

Twitter

Users can post videos up to 140 seconds long and Twitter reports that video tweets are increasing rapidly. In the first six months of 2016 they rose by over 50%.³⁵ The latest research by Esmee Fairbairn suggests that tweets with a video in them are 28% more likely to be retweeted.³⁶

Amnesty International's #gayturtle campaign on Twitter was an example of how an engaging video has been successful in challenging attitudes towards LGBT issues in Turkey. It was produced using a hidden camera in a pet shop. The sales assistant tells customers interested in buying a turtle that it is homosexual and the film shows their reactions.

WWF used the hashtag #earthhouruk to encourage its supporters to post their own videos on Twitter and other platforms.

The #notinmyname campaign, set up by London-based group Active Change Foundation in September 2014, was designed around a hashtag and in a one minute twenty second video British Muslims explained why they didn't support the actions or ideology of IS. Since the initial posting of this video the hashtag has been adopted by many Twitter users to express their own views.

Snapchat

Snapchat is one of the fastest growing social networks globally.³⁷ According to researchers there were 11.2 million UK users of the app by the end of 2016 and they spend an average of 25-30 minutes on the platform each day.³⁸ It is designed to be used on mobile phones and its videos are vertical. The images only last for a few seconds, then they automatically delete. Users can also create a Snapchat Story, which is a collection of photos and videos shown together, that will stay 'live' for 24 hours and then delete. Snapchat is notable because it has a younger, more female profile – 71% of its users are reportedly under 34 and 70% are women.³⁹

A number of NGOs and international organisations have been successful on Snapchat including Greenpeace, the UN, Charity Water and Ocean Conservancy. Snapchat's 'Discover' feature is attracting more journalistic content from Sky News, BuzzFeed, Vice, the BBC, National Geographic and a range of other media companies. The emphasis is on short, snackable content which will appeal to younger users.

METRICS

One of the key findings in all the interviews conducted for this report was that understanding online metrics and the response of users is crucial for videos to have impact. You need to know as much as possible about who is watching your content and how they react to it.

Navi Lamba, Social Media Manager at BBC Three, says that metrics can provide you with the insight you need to increase your reach: *There are two ways to measure success. The quantitative way is to measure shares, engaged reach, completion rates of a video and there is the qualitative way: what are people saying about it, what's the sentiment? It's not all about shares. You could get 100,000 shares on a post but what if everyone hated it or the comments are really negative? Is that a success? It's important to investigate why people are sharing things. Or why they aren't compelled to share something but are compelled to comment.*

How to measure success, impact and engagement

With so many data sources available, it's important to decide which metrics are relevant to achieve your goals. There are different ways of measuring impact and engagement:

- Consumption: how many people viewed, downloaded, or listened to a piece of content?
- Conversions: getting a user to take a desired action on your social media profiles, as defined by you. This can include filling out an online form, signing up for your website, clicking through from social media to your website, or any other goal that helps you achieve your objectives.
- Engagement: the total number of likes, shares, retweets and comments on a post.
- Reach: a measurement of the size of audience you are communicating with. It can be defined on a per-post or overall reach basis.
- Visits versus unique visits: visits count each time a person visits your site or page, regardless of whether or not they have visited before. Uniques count each person only once.
- Bounce rate: the percentage of people who land on your page and immediately leave, without viewing any other pages.
- Amplification rate: the number of shares or retweets on average for each post.
- Referral traffic: the amount of website traffic that is being driven from your social media accounts.

Henry Goldman, Head of Video at BuzzFeed News, says there are a range of different metrics he looks at depending on the platform: *YouTube is not about shares. With YouTube it's a matter of watch time. On Facebook shares is the most important thing, partly because Facebook is always changing its algorithm and it moves at a really fast pace. What might attract a lot of views one month won't necessarily do it the next month.*

One of the reasons for AJ+'s success over the past three years has been its analysis of data after it posts content. Geoffrey Dietrich is Executive Producer for AJ+ in San Francisco: *On Facebook, YouTube and Twitter you can't have a video up there without seeing how many times people have shared, liked or commented on it. We have an analytics team that manages the data collection and puts it on a website that we can all access. I like to look at it every couple of weeks as opposed to every day because I don't want the data to put me in a trap of going in circles.*

Andy Taylor says that building up a data archive is key: The skill of how you get something seen is as important as the content itself: *For creative people that's a hard message, but it's unfortunately the case at the moment as algorithms drive viewing, not schedulers. So all that understanding of how you get seen, how you get on the first page of search, how you make sure your videos are a suggested video, has someone watched something related? All of that knowledge then needs to go in to your production. We get 2.5 billion views a month to TV content on YouTube. That gives us data, real data on how the algorithm is favouring certain videos over others.*

How to get hold of data and use it effectively to amplify your content

There are three main ways to collect data: through the social media dashboards on the platforms themselves, by using third party social media analytics tools or by commissioning a specialist agency to provide you with deeper insights into the performance of your social content.

All the top social networks now have a built-in analytics dashboard for you to track your posts and campaigns.

There are hundreds of social media analytics tools. Some are available free and others for a monthly subscription. Amongst the more popular ones are Buffer, Moz Analytics and Sprout Social.

There are also specialist agencies such as Tubular Labs and We Are Social which can provide bespoke analysis of data and metrics. These agencies are used by broadcasters and companies like The Distillery to analyse the impact of their content.

Advice on metrics and data

Many of our interviewees had cautionary advice about chasing shares and likes, although they all believe that understanding your metrics and data are essential if you are to be successful.

Charlie Phillips, Head of Documentaries at *The Guardian*, says that data only tells half the story: *It's easy to measure the number of views and the number of social shares but I think it's also important to look at the general voice around a video. So what people are saying about it, whether they like it, the kind of feedback, who's sharing it, whether it seems like it influences people and they are using it for outreach, impact and campaigning.*

Alex Krasodomski-Jones also suggests that the number of shares may not be the most important indicator of success: *I think there is something to be said for thinking very seriously about a social media strategy beyond simply views, impressions, shares and clicks because by doing that it might mean you develop a cleverer strategy which targets people better, takes less time, costs you less, and has more impact. Election strategists understand full well that targeting those 1,000 swing voters is more effective than targeting 100,000 people who are probably already supportive of your candidate or you could never convert in the first place.*

Simon Kemp, Founder of Kepios, and global consultant for creative agency We Are Social, thinks that because there is so much data available from digital platforms, targeted marketing of social content is more cost effective than traditional communications methods: *Much as it seems intimidating, if you've got the skills to analyse the data it's actually an awful lot easier to identify people within the world of digital media. It requires a little bit more work but you get a better result at a granular level.*

Algorithms

Facebook, YouTube and the other online platforms prioritise content according to a system of computer algorithms. They do this to ensure that their platforms deliver content to users which they want to see, based on their previous choices and those of their friends. The prioritisation of content is fundamental to their operating models: if users enjoy their visit, they will stay longer and they will return.

Facebook alters its algorithms regularly which makes it difficult to know how you should post content to ensure your followers see it. At the moment these are the main factors which influence the Facebook algorithm and whether content appears in someone's newsfeed, but by the time you read this, it may well be out of date:

- How often someone has interacted with a certain type of post
- How often someone has hidden this type of post
- The level of engagement the page and post have received
- The performance of each post among users who have already viewed it

Twitter, like Facebook, has also decided to use algorithms to prioritise what users see based not on chronology but relevance. Their feature, 'the best Tweets you may have missed', is an expansion of the historical Tweets users could view previously. Users can opt out of this feature if they want. And Instagram is the latest network to base content on an algorithm because users were finding it hard to keep up with posts from their favourite followers.

Impacts and implications of algorithms

One of the impacts of algorithms is that they increase the echo chamber effect of social media sites. Users tend to follow like-minded people and therefore are increasingly likely only to see content which accords with their world view. This has implications for any organisation trying to reach beyond its supporters.

Another consequence of algorithms is that more sensational content is promoted because it provokes stronger reactions. This poses a particular challenge for organisations which want to publish content that is not sensational according to Alex Krasodomski-Jones: *In a world where sensationalism drives the things that people click on, is the middle ground sustainable anymore? The more neutral and more balanced you make your piece, the less likely it will be 'clickable' (so profitable) when in competition with those whose 'news' is optimised to clamour for digital attention. Yet the more sensational it is, the more trolling you will receive and the greater the questions around the neutrality and the balance of it from anyone who isn't already subscribed to your ideas, or anyone you might want to convert to your cause.*

The polarisation seen as a result of algorithms and echo chambers on social platforms is likely to continue and this will make it harder for organisations to have mass appeal unless they subscribe to shock tactics. Social media strategists tend to agree that this means they will need to respond by providing more targeted content for smaller groups or pay to have content inserted into users' newsfeeds.

James Whatley, Planning Partner of Innovation at Ogilvy & Mather, advises his clients to use data to ensure better targeting: *The way you can do targeting on Facebook these days is phenomenal. There are four hundred and fifty odd ways you can cut it. We did it for British Airways. It was a campaign called the Great British Summer where we specifically targeted ex-pats with content from their home town to convince them to come home for summer for a holiday in Britain. And it was phenomenal. It's a very mature and advanced way of targeting and re-targeting that we do. We ask, 'Are these people customers? Can we check their email address against our database?' If they are customers then they get shown a different piece of advertising versus those that aren't customers and you start looking at up to five, ten, fifteen different pieces of creative all in one campaign period because pieces change depending on who the audience is.*

WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK

The role of content aggregators like Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are crucial. In order to post videos successfully online you have to know how to play by their rules, and how to deliver what people want to watch and how to encourage them to share.

What drives the popularity of videos?

Our interviewees all had different responses to this question, highlighting the fact that there is no single magic rule to making a video go viral. Simon Kemp from We Are Social says there are four key types of content which deliver value for audiences: *Provide information, which might be 'we're having an event on 24th February, here's the time of day and the venue'. Then education, such as 'I want to learn how to play a guitar' and you could provide videos to show how to do that if you're a music company. Then entertainment which is very straightforward. And then the last which is distraction which is particularly important for people when they are waiting for a bus and they've got some time to kill.*

Have a clear proposition Damian Kavanagh, Controller of BBC3 says: *Subtlety doesn't work for us at all. We learned quite quickly that a clear top line is really important. It's got to leap off the page and say to someone, spend the next 15 minutes or half an hour with me, so the ideas and territories we're looking at have a much stronger sense of top line.*⁴⁰

Know what your audience wants Geoffrey Dietrich from AJ+ says: *It's telling the right stories, the right way at the right time on the right platforms. It's the more you know your audience, following what works and keeping the audience at the forefront of our minds.* He cites a video which worked well for AJ+ about a man who painted lawns during a drought in California.⁴¹ The drought was big news, but this story came at it from a different angle and attracted significant audiences. It was quirkily edited with a time-lapse sequence at the front, very visual and funny.

Prime audience expectations Henry Goldman from BuzzFeed says that the key is for audiences to get used to enjoying your video because this will mean they expect it and choose to watch it in future: *It is important to grow expectation of video for your page. Some organisations might do a few videos a year, but that's not enough on a Facebook page. You have to work out what your audience wants. And get them primed to expect video from your page on Facebook or whatever other platform you are on.* He cites recent success with a BuzzFeed video about a man going to the Department of Motor Vehicles, an unpopular experience in America, and paying for his ticket in one cent coins transported in wheelbarrows.⁴² *It went crazy and I asked the producer why she did it. She thought this would share because everyone hates the DMV and this is a story about a man sticking it to the DMV. It resonates with a lot of people.*

Surprise them or tell them something new For Charlie Phillips of *The Guardian*, international content works best where the story is central: *Strong stories with strong characters that are accessible for an audience who are used to relatively accessible, journalistic content. We don't over-complicate it. Our audience wants content that gives them a clear understanding of something new or surprises them with something they didn't know before.*

Visual Impact For Nathalie Malinarich of BBC News you should look for moments that are visual: *I think there are differences for video on news sites. If you think of incredible moments which could be natural disasters, so the moment a wave hits or the moment the earthquake strikes or the moment of a volcano erupting. And emotional testimony can work much better on video than it does in text.*

Timeliness of content Steve Wheen of The Distillery thinks that some content does well simply because it is current: *It's that timely piece of information from South Sudan. The famines that are breaking at the moment. It's that reaction, 'Oh this is actually happening now.' And so often we find that that is the super-shareable content.*

Inspire people with short stories Navi Lamba of BBC Three says you need to inspire audiences. She cites *Amazing Humans*, a BBC Three strand of short videos: *We often talk about people who overcome adversity or people who are doing something to help their community. There is one young woman who went on vacation to Sri Lanka. She ended up helping homeless pets and people were so moved by it they were finding out on their own about which charity she was associated with and how they could help in some way.*⁴³

What makes a video work online

Style All our interviewees agreed that the opening of a video is crucial – the first 3 seconds determine whether someone will continue to watch or not. Start with a strong character that gets you straight into the story, ideally saying something emotional. Note that if it's a woman talking, more women will watch; if it's a man more men will watch, so think about your target audience.

Native video Navi Lamba stresses that video should be native to the platform it's on: *People have different consumption habits depending on the platform they are on and are more likely to go to YouTube and sit there and watch a 20 minute video, on Facebook not so much, people are there to scroll through their newsfeed and want the jist of something rather than a full investment. So, make sure you're editing content in a way that suits those habits. So if it's for Tumblr share a GIF. If it's for Facebook make it a short, snappy video.*

Channel 4 News on Facebook has been particularly successful in the past couple of years. Daniel Pearl highlights some of the elements that have made its videos work well: *Nearly all video consumed on Facebook is mobile, therefore the stuff that you put up there has to work on a mobile phone whilst you're walking in a vertical frame with the sound down. From early on we decided that all our videos would all be subtitled. There are certain things we do in terms of editing, like you always start on a close up and you wouldn't start on a graphic, which is less grabby.*

Length The ideal maximum length of a Facebook video is about two minutes. On YouTube videos can run longer.

Square video For content intended for a platform which is mostly used on mobiles, such as Facebook, the frame should be square so that it works in a vertical mobile environment although some companies are starting to experiment with vertical video. For YouTube, a film intended for viewing on a TV or computer, a 6 x 9 frame is fine.

How producers and publishers encourage people to view their videos Henry Goldman says: *There is no single bible within BuzzFeed or within the world that has all the reasons people might share. This is a sea change in the way media works. With social you have to understand that video or any piece of content doesn't exist just as a piece of content. It exists as a transaction. It is something people want to use. They are not going to just watch it, they are going to use it and that changes the way you think of media.*

Make it easy to share Charlie Phillips highlights that it is crucial to make it easy to share content, a strategy which is often overlooked: *So having sharing buttons that make it easy for people to share content and lots of material already on social platforms so that they can just retweet content we've already put out there, rather than attach their own message.*

Engage partners to amplify your content Steve Wheen explains that for the DEC Nepal appeal a key part of their strategy was to get partners to help: *We engaged a lot of influencers to publish information about the appeal on their channels. And so we asked our creators to make these mandalas and talk about the DEC appeal. And we used it like a collaboration centre where we curated and created some content as well. So it was very much working out ways we could collaborate with them and curate their content and they curate ours.*

Understand that sharing is an indicator of personal identity Daniel Pearl believes it is important to understand that an element in sharing is that people want to reinforce their public identity: *It's about people sharing material that they feel moved by but also that they feel reflects on them in certain ways. If you're Scottish or if you're in favour of devolution, you might want to share a piece of content like that.*

Have a conversation One of the distinguishing characteristics of social content is that it is transactional. It allows a two way conversation. Steve Wheen says: *Especially on YouTube really successful content is conversational. It invites questions, it invites discussions. And that all plays to the algorithm because the more comment and the more engagement you've got on a video the higher up it gets placed in the algorithm.*

Often when comments are posted they go unanswered. According to Wheen, that is a real turn off for social media users. Having a conversation with followers can start a process where you engage more active users: *Once you start engaging in that conversation then you can come back with another video. It doesn't have to be highly produced, it can be just a piece to camera, talking about the top five comments on that video.* As Wheen says, if you build an audience who are all passionate about a topic, they start answering the questions for you, running the community on your behalf with you as the curator rather than having to answer all the questions yourself.

Experiment Most of the successful video producers we interviewed experiment with their content, so if the data shows that a video isn't performing well they re-edit it and then re-post it. Navi Lamba says that it is key to learn from mistakes: *There is a constant learning curve, figuring out what works and what doesn't and always investigating the failures. The key is to experiment and never assume there is only one way to tell a story.*

Is online video evolving?

Online platforms are constantly experimenting with video formats to engage their users in a more immersive experience. This is driving the production of more experimental formats such as virtual

reality, circular, 360, panoramic, live and augmented content. Platform algorithms tend to prioritise whatever the latest new development is, so it is worth being aware of platform strategies.

Geoffrey Dietrich says 360 has so far been a mixed success but it has great potential: *We have to ask what is the value added for a new format to our audience as opposed to doing it for the sake of doing it. If you're going to bother telling a story in 360 with the energy and the money and the technology that's needed, you'd better make sure it's a story where you're in the middle of something. Take the audience to a place where the average viewer can't get to.*

CONCLUSION

There are some key lessons from this report for NGOs wishing to produce online video. It's essential to start from the perspective of what you think your target audiences will be interested in. Different teams in an NGO may want to reach different audiences, so segment your audience, co-ordinate and use different platforms to reach different cohorts; have a range of playlists.

Making the best use of data is hugely important. Study the data gathered from previous campaigns and utilise it to understand what works and what doesn't for your organisation and the issues you're concerned with. As the video is posted online, look at the data but focus on the metrics which matter to you. Don't just measure success by the number of likes or shares – what does that tell you about impact? Understand algorithms to ensure your videos are promoted.

When planning online video content, follow a step-by step process. Think about your desired consequence: what do you want people to do next both in the short and long-term: share, donate, get involved, join a community, be inspired? Identify your target audiences. Identify the best platforms to reach those audiences. Optimise your content to work on those platforms.

Think about what will motivate people to watch and share your video. Think about how your video will be watched and plan accordingly: The physical setting of your user - on the couch or on a crowded bus? The social setting of your user – are they *alone, with friends or colleagues or family?* *What is their digital connection – broadband or mobile network?* *What is the best delivery method – mobile app, chatbot, website?* *What's the best time of day or day of the week to make your content live?*

Finally, borrow what works from commercial media producers, such as food, animal videos, humour, and 'how to' videos. Think about how you can use these genres as a way into a subject. Allow and encourage a conversation. This will drive your content up newsfeeds. Experiment. If something doesn't work, re-edit it and try again. Keep experimenting to find out what works for your audience and what doesn't. Use popular vloggers/influencers to attract audiences. Think before posting: more posts don't necessarily mean greater engagement. How often do you need to engage with your audiences – would fewer, bigger, better posts work to your advantage?

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