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### Evolution of YouTube

YouTube is a globally known form of self-expression through video. Launching in May of 2005, this new social platform became the home to hundreds of thousands of users. These users made YouTube a place to post their pointless, but entertaining home videos, sarcastic parodies, and short comedies. Some things never change. However, this site has evolved and progressed to become used by a wide array of people for various purposes. Now, YouTube is a place for young artists to broadcast their talents, hence their slogan, "Broadcast Yourself," in a way that they are unable to do on any other social media site. YouTube has become a verb: if a person wants to see a music video, catch up on their favorite channel, or watch a how-to video, they just have to "YouTube it." It has never been so easy to access information and entertainment, as well as to share it. Youtubers, through the years, have created their own community in which they can comment on each other's videos and subscribe to other channels. How has YouTube's culture changed throughout the years? In the beginning, it was just another amateur experience sharing website, but YouTube has morphed into a significant source for viewer amusement, advertisement, and has become a way of life for users.

YouTubers are their own kind of people, who do what they love for the entertainment of their audience. They create their videos to inspire, inform, persuade, entertain, and learn. A lot of people have their own channels, in which they create a collection of videos that represent themselves. The reason they put up these videos has changed over the years. At first, it was

probably for more personal reasons, maybe to organize all the videos on their computer, or just to share a specific home video with friends. At this point, YouTube is used in a lot of cases, as a way to entertain other viewers.

There are a lot of YouTubers that portray a character throughout their videos, such as Fred, who had more of an entertainment purpose to his series than some of the earliest videos. Fred's character is a six year old child who goes on "adventures" and documents them as they are happening. Lucas Cruikshank, clearly a teenage boy, started this channel when he was just 13. He used his computer and recording devices to modify the sound of his voice to be a few octaves higher, adding to the effect of being a kid, which is what made the videos so comical to watch in the first place. Throughout his videos, he kept to his character and added in a few characters which were never seen, but sometimes heard: Judy was the girl he was in love with, and Kevin seemed to be his enemy. These videos started six years ago, and Fred has not been in conversation for the last few years. The Fred channel exemplifies a common theme of character based channels that have been popping up over the years. His videos were fairly simple, with one camera filming him, edited just with several cuts. Videos like this could potentially be considered low quality in this day and age as far as filming is concerned, but compared to the very first videos on YouTube, it is at least more planned out. The very first video ever posted to YouTube was called "Me at the Zoo," which was surprisingly only 19 seconds of a man named Karim at the zoo, with no other purpose than to show where he was. This man was the co-founder of YouTube. That itself proves that it had a different purpose than what Fred set out to do. Karim was posting a video simply so that there was content at all on YouTube, while Fred aimed to entertain, and gain followers. Lucas Cruikshank actually became a case of fame. After a few years, Nickelodeon took notice of him and decided to include him in television shows like

iCarly, and made a movie based on his character because of how popular he was getting. On the other hand, Karim's simple video did not get him starring on any television network partially due to the fact that his video was created too early on in the development of YouTube; before there was any established reasons to post.

Changes in videos also happen within one channel. For example, the channel Smosh by Ian Andrew Hecox and Anthony Padilla has been slightly changing for around ten years. Their videos are always comical, whether they are short little skits or viewer request videos. One of their first videos, "How Not to Make a First Impression," from seven years ago, features them at a much younger age, creating a small skit. They do not use any special effects to enhance the video, just the skit itself with some mediocre editing. Seven years later, Hecox and Padilla post about three videos a week, all with gaudy word art and special effects. In a recent video, "Backwards Challenge," the two boys took suggestions of actions that they could record themselves performing backwards. Then, they used a reverse effect to make it look like they were moving forward to see whose version looked more realistic. It has become part of the YouTube culture for audience feedback to be normal and expected. Most users request feedback from their viewers in order to enhance their channel and gain even more followers. In between these two types of videos is a wide range of other comedies which evolved into the videos they produce today.

Because they are one of the most popular channels on the site, Smosh makes money on their videos on YouTube, which exemplifies one of the greatest changes of YouTube: the ability for users to earn money. In 2007, YouTube made it possible for everyday people to get paid for doing something they love by creating the Partner Program. Some channels get so many viewers that they get paid to continue making videos in an attempt to keep people coming back to

YouTube. Because they are so popular, they get ads tacked onto their videos, especially based on how many views they get. When Smosh, or any other big channel gets more views, they get more revenue. However, they are not guaranteed to get paid (YouTube Help). This is an astonishing concept, considering almost ten years ago, no one had any future notions of this site, other than it being just like any other media website. In most cases, media sites get extremely popular and then die down after a few years,. People are not only welcome to post videos, but encouraged to make videos interesting enough that will make people want to keep coming back to the website.

In some cases, YouTube stars do not get paid directly because of YouTube, but because they ended up making it big. This site started as just a small home video sharing site and has become a great beginning for careers outside of YouTube. The most classic example of this is Justin Bieber's story. As a fourteen year old, he got discovered by Usher, just from posting a few videos of himself singing. Usher saw potential in him, so he promoted Justin and he instantly became famous because his videos spread throughout the entire internet. Justin put his music out there to share with the world, in hopes of a few listeners and few gained fans. Instead of just a few subscribers, he acquired an entire fan base of millions of "Beliebers," just because he decided to post a few videos of him singing. This included arguably his most popular song, "Baby," which got over 820 million views. Even though a lot of people are not a fan of his music, it is still an incredible concept that this fourteen year old kid just barely showcased his singing, and is now a multimillionaire at age twenty because "Baby" went viral.

YouTube is starting to take a unique route in the structure of its website, resulting in a shift of user purpose. Even with all of the changes that have already happened, it continues to adapt to what users are interested in. Netflix is becoming the object of envy. Rather than several

individual videos, YouTube is moving in the direction of paid subscriptions. Especially in the last few years, Netflix has exploded with user interest: unlimited movies and television series has become irresistible. With YouTube channels taking over, it has already started in this direction, since each channel is like its own series. The only thing left for the formula is money.

According to the New York Times, “YouTube’s subscription effort is still in the very early phases” (Dougherty). The goal of becoming like Netflix might be unattainable, but seems to be the direction YouTube is taking.

There is also the fact that independent YouTubers that are not “big names” will be removed from the site. Rumor has it that if they do not sign with YouTube, all their content will be erased. At this point of the progression of the website, money is taking over as one of the most significant reasons to make any changes. It would be unfortunate to see videos taken off the original YouTube, which was free and full of random, non-subscription videos. There supposedly will be a service called “Music Pass” in which people can pay to not listen to ads and be able to download music in addition to just listening. “While the field is already crowded with popular programs like Spotify, Beats Music, iTunes Radio, Samsung’s Milk and recently-added Amazon Prime Music, YouTube is easily one of the most used platforms by people to consume music” and for that reason, will continue to be on top (McIntyre). Because it has been in the business for so long and it would not have to start all over to get its name out there, the YouTube music concept would most likely be successful. And while it would be successful as far as money is concerned, it would be veering away from the original purpose of the website. This is not necessarily bad, but that conveys the significance of money in decision making and how it can be the main reason for a shift in purpose.

The leap from being a young, video sharing website to being a big time music sharing or subscription-based video series site is quite substantial. How did it get to this point? YouTube was created with a few events in mind: “Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction at the Super Bowl, and the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean”. These events made it possible for the website to gain popularity, considering everyone was interested in seeing them take place. In September of 2005 was the first video to get over one million views. Noticing the website’s possibility, Google took action and bought it for 1.65 billion dollars: a big step forward. The money started flowing for users in 2007 when YouTube allowed them to get paid through the Partner Program, and “the most successful users were earning six-figure incomes.” Some users were even able to quit their normal jobs because their YouTube channel was popular enough. A combination of this, and the creation of Vevo in 2009, are probably two of the major causes of YouTube’s major shift, happening now (Dickey). These two events have caused YouTube to explode in popularity, which still expands more and more each day. With each advance in the website, it gains more money and power

YouTube has milestones that are not only significant to itself, but also affect the world around it. Through the past ten years, it has evolved to become arguably one of the most useful and popular media sites in existence. YouTubers have become an essential part of social media by providing the world with their talent, comedy, or views on multiple topics. Money has driven a lot of the changes in the website, but a lot have also been because of what users have proven interest to. Will it become bigger than Netflix or Spotify? It has progressed from its original simple form to become such a relevant source of entertainment that today’s society could not imagine without, and will only continue to grow.

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