

Chapter 10

Academics' Active and Passive Use of YouTube for Research and Leisure

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents findings from a survey study regarding academics' use of YouTube videos for research and leisure. The results are based on a large-scale survey which reflects responses from over 1,800 researchers based at 12 Russell Group universities in the UK. The results suggest that YouTube has been a very popular entertainment tool. The majority of academics have watched YouTube videos for leisure purposes whilst almost half of them watched YouTube videos for academic purposes. However, active uses of YouTube for posting videos were still limited. There were some differences in the extent of active/passive use of YouTube between groups in terms of academic discipline, age and seniority. Academics who had received social media training, recommendations from colleagues, had teaching duties and positive attitudes towards YouTube as a means of dissemination, were more likely to post videos on YouTube for research purposes. Additionally, academics who owned a smartphone were more likely to post videos on YouTube for leisure purposes.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have changed the way research is conducted, processed and distributed. The so called Science 2.0 or Research 2.0 enables new practices which focus on opening up the research process for wider participation and collaboration through new technologies and online applications (Ullmann et al., 2010). Research 2.0 refers to new scholarly practices that are digital, networked and open (Weller, 2011). Research 2.0 and digital technology have created novel distribution channels and information platforms for academic users. Social media tools such as Twitter, blogs and academic social networking sites such as academia.edu and ResearchGate, have become popular among academic users and are found to be effective information resources as well as dissemination channels (Kjellberg, 2010; Thelwall & Kousha,

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2014a, 2014b). In the past decade, an academic social movement namely “open science movement” has been based on the belief that “scientific knowledge of all kinds should be openly shared as early as is practical in the discovery process” (Nielsen, 2011). Research 2.0 and new media tools have opened up new opportunities for open science in practice (Scheliga & Friesike, 2014). There has been an increasing amount of literature regarding the use of new media tools such as Twitter, blogs and academic social networking sites for scholarly communication in the last few years. However, very little attention has been paid to academics’ use of YouTube and video-sharing services for research purposes.

Established in 2005, YouTube has grown to become the largest and most highly visited online video-sharing service with over 1 billion users, localised in 75 countries (YouTube, 2015). In the academic literature, YouTube has been discussed in numerous ways: as a platform for higher education institutions to publish teaching materials, such as lectures and presentation videos (Young, 2008), as a repository of video material for the media collection of academic libraries (Cho, 2013), and as a platform for alternative/citizen journalism (Antony & Thomas, 2010; Poell & Borra, 2012). YouTube company itself desires collaboration with academic institutions. The University of California at Berkeley was the first to sign agreements with YouTube to establish official channels for the distribution of educational content (Young, 2008). In 2009, YouTubeEdu was founded by company officials to aggregate academic content including lectures and course materials from hundreds of colleges and universities, which had already been uploaded to YouTube (Gilroy, 2010). YouTube videos have been adopted in the higher education for teaching and learning inside and outside classrooms (Duncan, Yarwood-Ross, & Haigh, 2013; Tan & Pearce, 2012). YouTube is built upon digital platform and can provide free and open access to digital content. YouTube users are able to form a networked community and maintain connections through various interactions via subscribing to video producers’ channels, sharing videos on other social networking sites and commenting on videos (Biel, 2009; Lange, 2007). Moreover, users may “like” or “dislike” a video to show their support or disapproval and this information is openly displaced right under a video (Chelaru, Orellana-Rodriguez, & Altingovde, 2012). For academic content, those comments and rating on social media would have similar function as peer review, but in a less structured and more open way (Powell, Jacob, & Chapman, 2011). Hence, scholarly practice on YouTube can be digital, networked and open, which shows YouTube’s potential to contribute to the development of Research 2.0. However, since YouTube has been a relatively new tool for academic users to enhance teaching and learning, little is known to what extent academics use YouTube in their research work and what factors are associated with scholarly practices on YouTube.

Having identified the gap in the literature, this chapter intends to add to empirical knowledge in the field of scholarly communication in relation to the use of YouTube videos, by analysing data from a large-scale survey which reflects responses from over 1,800 academics based at 12 Russell Group universities in the UK. This study aims to explore the extent of academics’ active contribution to YouTube videos and passive viewing behaviour, and the differences between groups of academic discipline, gender, age and seniority. Factors that could be related to the likelihood of active YouTube use will be examined by statistic modelling. This chapter concludes with discussion, limitation and recommendation, setting directions for future research.

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