

TECH3022-18 Social Media Practice

Lecture Thirteen Participation Culture

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1 Introduction – Participation Culture

“What happens when many people make active decisions to put content in motion by passing along an image, song, or video clip to friends and family members or to larger social networks?” (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 9).

“Peering succeeds because it leverages self-organization—a style of production that works more effectively than hierarchical management for certain tasks.” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

“In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, Jenkins and his colleagues explain that participatory cultures are characterised by ‘relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some types of information membership whereby what it know by the most experienced is passed along to novices (p.7). ‘A participatory culture’ they add, ‘is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at least they care about what other people think about what they have created)’ (p.7)” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 3).

“A central goal of this report is to shift the focus of the conversation about the digital divide from questions of technological access to those of opportunities to participate and to develop the cultural competencies and social skills needed for full involvement” (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009).

2 Affordances & Constraints

“All tools bring with them different kinds of affordances and constraints. The way McLuhan puts it, while new technologies extend certain parts of us, they amputate other parts” (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 3).

“We can divide the different affordances and constraints media introduce into five different kinds: affordances and constraints on what we do, what we can mean, how we can relate to others, how or what we can think, and, finally, who we can be” (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 5).

- What does social media allow you to do?
- What does social media open up?
- Who does social media empower?
- What’s gained in embracing social media?
- What does social media stop you from doing?
- What does social media close down?
- Who is marginalised by social media?
- What’s lost in embracing social media?

“Armed with inexpensive tools for capturing, editing, and organising, people tap into a vast ocean of real-time data and multimedia content to promote personal and political interests. Functions once monopolised by a handful of hierarchical institutions (e.g. newspapers, television stations, and universities) have been usurped by independent publishers, video-sharing sites, collaboratively sustained knowledge banks, and fan-generated entertainment” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 3).

3 Emergent Interdisciplinarity

“Academics often think in terms of disciplinary boundaries, but participatory-culture studies are more properly thought of as an emergent, interdisciplinary project” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 4).

“Contribution, collaboration, and collective knowledge” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 4).

“Participatory cultures are characterised by commitment to access, expression, sharing, mentorship, the need to make a difference, and the desire for social connections” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 11).

4 User-Generated Content/ Peer Production

“The collaborative literacy practices observed in wikis are not in and of themselves new. However, the potential of wikis to involve a massive, loosely organised, global community of the most unknown volunteers is. Wikis change the quality of collaborative practices, both through the technological affordances that they introduce, as well as the social norms that grow up around established wiki communities” (Jones & Hafner, 2012, p. 170).

“YouTube, for instance, has increasingly developed partnerships with clients – entertainment companies, advertisers, universities, and so on – that determine specific aspects of how uploaded videos are treated, how or if they will be promoted, branded, or categorised, and from and to whom revenue for advertising will flow” (Kelty, 2013, p. 29).

5 Affordances of YouTube

Janet Murray discusses the four affordances of digital medium. Murray stated the four affordances are encyclopaedic, spatial, procedural, and participatory.

Everything made of electronic bits is potentially:

- Procedural (composed of executable rules)
- Participatory (inviting human action and manipulation of the represented world)
- Encyclopaedic (containing very high capacity of information in multiple media formats)
- Spatial (navigable as an information repository and/or a virtual place)

These affordances make up the designer’s palette for representation in any digital format or genre. Inventing the Medium offers a methodology and principles of design for the collective effort of maximizing the expressive power of each of these affordances. <http://inventingthemedium.com/four-affordances/>

The first affordance of digital media that Murray discusses in Inventing the Medium is the procedural medium of all digital artefacts. She points out that this medium is the artefact’s “ability to represent and execute conditional behaviours” (Murray, 2011).

- What are the ‘procedures’ for accessing, searching, using and sharing content on YouTube?
- What are the conditional behaviours that YouTube requires for posting and sharing content?
- How does YouTube help content spread?

The second affordance that Murray points out is the participatory aspect of digital artefacts. She explains that with the programming of a system, there is a reciprocal and interactive aspect where the

user; “the responsiveness of digital media... excites our desire to do something, to see what will happen if we drag something around, click on an underlined word, or otherwise poke at the environment” (Murray 56).

- How does YouTube encourage users to ‘poke’ around and experiment with content?
- How does YouTube enhance a sense of ‘participation’ and the sense of reciprocal interaction?
- In what way do users get excited about using and sharing content on YouTube?

The encyclopaedic affordance is the digital artefact having high capacity of information in multiple media formats. More specifically, this affordance highlights the “unequalled storage potential” (Murray, 2011).

- How much information is it possible to access using YouTube?
- What forms of knowledge exchange are promoted by YouTube?
- How do you sort the good from the bad content, or the useful from the redundant content on YouTube?

The last affordance that Murray points out is the spatial medium of digital artefacts. The spatial affordance is the ability for the user to navigate themselves through different virtual environments. When “exploring” people’s profiles, including their pictures and their friend’s profiles, one can consider the user to be navigating through spaces. <http://shanicek.com/blogposts/the-four-affordances-and-instagram/>

- What does YouTube offer its users in terms of ‘navigable spaces’?
- If YouTube is a space, what form does that space take?
- How can these spaces be reimaged and what different techniques do we need to adopt to navigate them?

“What is participation like today? How has it become newly important with respect to yesterday? Are participatory democracy, audience participation, user-generated content, peer production, participant observation, crowdsourcing all the same phenomena? If they are different, what characterises the difference” (Kelty, 2013, p. 23).

6 Genres of YouTube

The 13 Most Popular Types Of YouTube Videos

When YouTube came onto the scene ten years ago, no one expected the video-sharing platform to completely change how we consume digital video content. Today, YouTube has not only revolutionized how we consume and interact with online video, it has also spawned completely new video genres and hundreds of pop culture icons unique to itself. From vlogs to unboxing videos, top YouTubers in YouTube's creative community have completely redefined entertainment, learning, shopping, and more.

- Product Review Videos
- How-To Videos
- Vlogs
- Gaming Videos
- Comedy/Skit Videos
- Haul Videos

- Memes/Tags
- Favourites/Best-Of
- Educational Videos
- Unboxing Videos
- Q&A Videos
- Collection
- Prank Videos

<http://mediakix.com/2016/02/most-popular-youtube-videos/#gs.sk3FEXQ>

Bizarre YouTube Genres That Are (Somehow) Hugely Popular

“YouTube is incomprehensibly big right now. It's hard to even say how many videos are on the site, or how much time you'd spend watching said videos, because of the insane rate new content is added -- about 300 hours' worth every minute. That's 432,000 hours a day. That's 157.6 million hours a year. That's insane. And amongst all that content, some definite and inexplicable trends have begun to carve out niches for themselves. Now, obviously we all love cat videos, footballs to the groin, and people throwing dildos onto football fields. But there are other, way more bizarre sub-genres gaining popularity out there. Can you explain any of them?”

- Unboxing Videos
- Disgusting Grossness (i.e. zit popping).
- Just Playing Games
- People High After Dental Surgery
- Putting Stuff in Liquid Nitrogen
- Virtual Reality with Old People

<http://www.cracked.com/blog/6-super-popular-youtube-genres-you-didnt-know-existed/>

Oddly Hypnotic Genres Of YouTube Videos

As YouTube grows and evolves, with its many millions of users helping to continuously define and redefine what YouTube is every hour of every day, its digital halls have become filled with secret doors and alternate routes leading off the beaten path of mainstream videos and into less-travelled lands where highly specialized genres gather and proudly declare, "You'll watch the shit out of us for hours, and you'll never know why!" They're boring. They're stupid. They're useless. They are an absolute waste of time ... but, they're impossible to look away from. These are the YouTube microgenres that have no right to be as addictive as they are.

- Ambient Noise From Fictional Space Ships
- People/Machines Doing Their Jobs
- Foreign Street Food Vendors With Style
- People Making Kits Of Tiny Fake Food
- First-Person Camera Phone Footage of Theme Park Rides

<http://www.cracked.com/blog/5-oddly-hypnotic-genres-youtube-videos/>

7 YouTube Stars

“As a media company, YouTube is a platform for, and an aggregator of, content, but it is not a content producer itself. It is an examples of what David Weinberger (2007) calls ‘meta businesses’ – the ‘new category of business that enhances the value of information developed elsewhere and thus benefits the original creators of that information” (Burgess & Green, 2008, p. 4).

“YouTube is not actually in the video business – its business, rather, is the provision of a convenient and usable platform for online video sharing: users (some of them premium content partners) supply the content, which in turn brings new participants and new audiences” (Burgess & Green, 2008, p. 4).

“YouTubers, sometimes called YouTube personalities or YouTube celebrities, are a class of Internet celebrity who have gained popularity from their videos on the video-sharing website YouTube. Some YouTube personalities have corporate sponsors, such as Polaris, who pay for product placement in their clips or production of online ads. Networks sometimes support YouTube celebrities.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_YouTubers

13-24 Year Olds Watching More YouTube Than TV - To The Surprise of No-one

The young are turning away from the TV and towards online video, and they are consuming more digital content than ever. Not only are they in charge of the media they consume, but they consider YouTube Influencers more relatable than traditional TV and movie stars.

<http://tubularinsights.com/13-24-watching-more-youtube-than-tv/>

YouTube Stars Who Are Taking Over the World

Just what is their appeal? Perhaps it’s that teenagers feel these performers are not promoting an unachievable lifestyle in some aspirational manner, but instead are letting them into their lives (and, frankly, their bedrooms) in an honest, approachable, and often funny way.

<http://www.vogue.com/2950137/most-popular-youtube-stars/>

“If you are older than 25 (or don’t have a teenager living in your house), you’d be totally forgiven for having no idea who Smosh and Pointless Alfie are. But they and other young YouTube stars are watched by millions each day, mobbed on the street, have extremely profitable careers, and are wanted by all of the biggest brands. And they’ve achieved all of this often without leaving their bedrooms.

It is easy, of course, to dismiss a group of people who have made a vocation of filming themselves surrounded by shopping bags, “hauling” (this is when you show your recent purchases to camera), or goofing around on-screen, but their success is unquestionable. Earlier this year, Variety conducted a study of 1,500 American teens and found that the cultural figures they cited as most influential were YouTube favorites, overtaking both Jennifer Lawrence and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Just what is their appeal? Perhaps it’s that teenagers feel these performers are not promoting an unachievable lifestyle in some aspirational manner, but instead are letting them into their lives (and, frankly, their bedrooms) in an honest, approachable, and often funny way. Here, we’ve rounded up a list of eight stars who have risen to fame on YouTube, information with which you’ll be set to impress any thirteen-year-old.”

Smosh: Coming soon to a cinema near you, comedy duo Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox has just announced they will star in their first feature-length movie, from the director Alex Winter of *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*. With nineteen million followers, the California pair first found fame after their rendition of the Pokémon theme song went viral in 2005, and are now two of the most popular faces on YouTube, famed for popular parody videos.

Bethany Mota: Meet eighteen-year-old Californian haul girl Bethany Mota. She may look like your normal girl next door, but since she began hauling in 2009, she now has two million followers on Twitter, four million followers on Instagram, and seven-and-a-half million subscribers on YouTube. (Yes, that's more than Gaga or Beyoncé.) Her fans, known as "motavators," are moving her to the real world; she's now designing ongoing fashion collections for Aéropostale.

Zoella: Brit girl Zoe Sugg, as she's known IRL, has had a casual 270 million views of her videos. They feature her sitting on her bed, offering beauty advice, or doing shopping hauls, often with her YouTube boyfriend Pointless Alfie (scroll down for more on him) or one of her vlogger best friends. The 24-year-old has just launched a beauty line across the U.K. and has signed a book deal with Penguin for her first novel, *Girl Online*, coming out next month.

PewDiePie: The king of Google's online videos is Swedish hipster Felix Kjellberg. The 24-year-old officially became more popular than Rihanna or anyone else in the world when his gaming channel (he films himself playing games while commenting on them) surpassed hers to become the most viewed channel of all time, with more than 31 million subscribers. He is also one of the few YouTubers to have spoken about the financial success of vlogging when he admitted in a Reddit AMA that in 2013 he'd made more than \$4 million from ad revenue. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-IHJZR3Gqxm24_Vd_AJ5Yw

<https://youtu.be/osPKCm7jmeQ>

Michelle Phan: As the first woman to reach one billion views on YouTube, Michelle Phan is a vlogger who can re-create the makeup looks of Lady Gaga or *Game of Thrones* to perfection—and has received more than 56 million views on her most popular DIY video. The YouTube beauty guru and entrepreneur has already fronted campaigns for Lancôme, L'Oréal, and Dr Pepper.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuYx81nzzz4OFQrhbKDzTng>

<https://youtu.be/QiMqLdATeGc>

PointlessBlog: With almost three million subscribers to his YouTube page, 21-year-old Brit boy Alfie Deyes has made a career out of making funny "pointless" videos. They often feature YouTuber girlfriend Zoella or fellow British YouTube friends Marcus Butler and Jim Chapman. This month, he released his debut book *The Pointless Book* and shut down Piccadilly Circus when nearly 8,000 fans showed up at the book launch party.

ISuperwomanII: Easily the funniest girl in the YouTube world, Lilly Singh from Toronto specializes in stand-up comedy and sketches with videos that include "Shopping With Parents" and "Why I Don't Go to the Doctor's." With a following of more than four million already, we predict this 26-year-old rising star will have her own TV show before long.

JacksGap: Twin brothers Jack and Finn Harries are much like a YouTube version of One Direction. With their Brit accents and blow-dried hair, the pair originally started vlogging about taking a year to

travel before university, and now post regular cheeky chats to nearly four million followers.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTqEu1wZDBju2tHkNP1dwzQ>

Tyler Oakley: Mathew Tyler Oakley (born March 22, 1989), known as Tyler Oakley, is an American YouTube and podcast personality, humorist, author and activist. Much of Oakley's activism had been dedicated to LGBT youth, LGBT rights, as well as social issues including healthcare, education, and the prevention of suicide among LGBT youth. Oakley regularly posts material on various topics, including queer politics, pop culture and humor. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyler_Oakley

<https://www.youtube.com/user/tyleroakley>

An Honest Conversation About "Fame" | Tyler Oakley

<https://youtu.be/V2AbGdNXgOw>

8 Generative Media

“The new prosumer YouTube aesthetic often emphasises insistent reiteration,... Many YouTube genres have taken up an obsessive pulse” (Keazor & Wübbena, 2015, p. 236)

“The production practices of YouTube – including the DIY aesthetic – exert a strong influence. Fans with no training want to make something. With favourite materials - thins to be defomed and re-configured anew – they start projects but they may not know how to put materials together” (Keazor & Wübbena, 2015, p. 237).

“Today’s makers eschew [taught] constructs, instead jumping in with their editing software and just get going” (Keazor & Wübbena, 2015, p. 236).

“The fact that YouTube is co-created is not always apparent to with YouTube Inc. or the participants within the system. Indeed,... many of these different participants engage with YouTube as if it is a space specifically designed for them” (Burgess & Green, 2008, p. vii).

“Creative cultures flourished beneath the surface of the mainstream media; many of these cultures were nurtured and extended by mimeographed zines” (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 19).

“While hierarchies are not vanishing, profound changes in the nature of technology, demographics, and the global economy are giving rise to powerful new models of production based on community, collaboration, and self-organisation rather than on hierarchy and control” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 1).

9 Participatory Cultures:

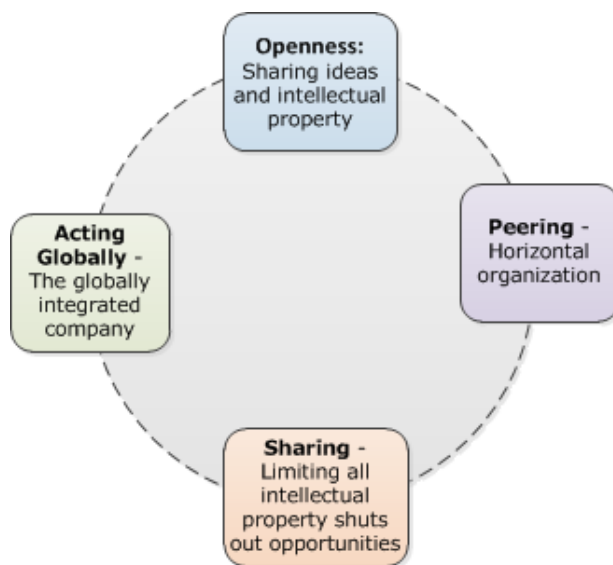
- Artistic expression.
- Civic engagement.
- Strong support for creating and sharing.
- What is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.
- Members believe their contributions matter.
- Feel some degree of social connection with one another.

“On YouTube, repetition is often combined with boredom and tedium. Repetition, of course, can also be paired with a kind of jacked-up, unrelenting excitement” (Keazor & Wübbena, 2015, p. 239).

10 Collective Intelligence

According to Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, we have entered a new age in which a form of 'collective intelligence' is emerging from our ability to collaborate en-mass. Tapscott and Williams argue that in order for this collective intelligence to be realised, four principles need to co-exist:

- **Openness** – a shared process of the development of ideas and intellectual property. Ideas can come from anywhere, and not just those people who we designated as 'creative' or 'intellectual'.
- **Peering** – organisations that are decentred and flat, with an emphasis on self-organisation which eschews hierarchical management.
- **Sharing** - limiting intellectual property rights so that emerging markets can develop with more momentum.
- **Acting Globally** – Widespread development and production practices that are facilitated by information and communication technology, across territories, time zones, traditions and cultures (Tapscott & Williams, 2010).



These four principles represent a significant shift in the range of potential options that are being brought about in the emerging socially mediated environment. They offer a real and tangible shift away from the restricted social organisation models of the past, to a form of social organisation that is less hierarchical, more open, more suited to innovation and more dynamic.

“In the new ubiquitous digital environment – especially in social media – people are confronted with information flows so varied and abundant that they must learn to process them systematically” (Levy, 2013, p. 101).

“People must first learn to control their attention: they therefore have to define their interests, order their priorities, identify their areas of effective competency and determine the knowledge and know-how they wish to acquire” (Levy, 2013, p. 101).

“Once we have set our priorities, we have to choose our sources of information. In contemporary social media, these sources are mainly other people. We thus need to spend time examining the information flows produced by others in order to choose those that best correspond to our objectives” (Levy, 2013, p. 102).

“Once the information has been filtered, categorised and recorded, we need to be able to make a critical, creative synthesis. Only by so doing can we assimilate the information and transform it into personal knowledge... The essential point is to make the synthesis public, that is, to introduce it into the open process of creative conversation of a community or network of people” (Levy, 2013, p. 102).

11 Building Collaboration

“Across the seven models of mass collaboration, however, there are several additional design principles that are common to most if not all of them” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 309).

“Take Cues from You Lead Users”

“Cultivat[e] a deep-rooted social community that is intensely involved in the evolution and growth of the site” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 310).

“Build Critical Mass”

“The secret to successful peering is building a critical mass of participants that attracts more and more people to the ecosystem” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 310).

“Supply an Infrastructure for Collaboration”

An important part of creating critical mass involves cooperating to supply the open standards, shared IP, legal foundations, and collaborative infrastructure that will support the innovation process” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 310).

“Take Time to Get the Structures and Governance Right”

Take time to “flesh out” the “model of collaborative research and development” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 311).

“Make Sure All Participants Can Harvest Some Value”

“People who participate in peer production communities have all kinds of reasons for jumping in... Providing the right for everyone (including free riders) to enjoy non-commercial benefits to keep the barriers to participation low” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 311).

“Abide by Community Norms and Create Conditions of Trust”

“Individuals involved in mass collaboration may have highly individual motivations and goals but they are expected to follow rules and protocols” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 311).

“Let the Process Evolve”

“There are two ways to build complex things: engineering and evolutions” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 311).

“Don’t Lose sight of Your Business Objectives”

“Wikinomics does mean having well-developed and well-understood internal goals to guide external engagement strategies” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 312).

“Collaborations Starts Internally”

“Wikis provide a perfect venue for collaborative brainstorming, project development, and project documentation and management” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 313).

“Finding the Internal Leadership for Change”

“Champions of [...] change need to be sensitive to the[...] concerns and structure their engagement with the enterprise in a way that allows the benefits of collaboration to manifest themselves in pilot projects that can be scaled up and help build further momentum for cultural change” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

“Hone Your Collaborative Mind”

“Engaging in collaborative communities means ceding some control, sharing responsibility, embracing, transparency, managing conflict, and accepting that successful projects will take on lives of their own” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 314).

12 Summary

“If there are indeed different ‘participatory cultures’ then the work of explaining their differences must be done by thinking concretely about the practices, tools, ideologies, and technologies that make them up. Participation is about power, and, no matter how ‘open’ a platform is, participation will reach a limit circumscribing power and its distribution. Understanding those limits requires carefully describing the structures of participation, the processes of governance and inclusion, the infrastructure of software, protocols and networks, as well as the rhetoric and expectations of individuals” (Kelty, 2013, p. 29).

“Clear goals, structure, discipline, and leadership in the organization will remain as important as ever, and perhaps more so as peer production emerges as a key organizing principle for the workplace.” (Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

- How can we make sense of the different practices, tools, ideologies, and technologies of participation culture?
- How do we account for power in participation platforms?
- What and where are the limits of power in participation culture?
- How can we describe the routines of participation?
- How can we describe the processes of governance and inclusion?
- What are the technical and cultural affordances that shape our routines and protocols in network life?

12.1 Principles of Social Media

- Lower Expectations.
- If something is worth doing, it’s worth doing badly.
- If you can’t join it parody it.
- Fake it till you make it.

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