



# CULTURE & TRENDS REPORT

## 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

AN ENTERTAINMENT REVOLUTION  
20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

A graphic of large, metallic silver balloons spelling out the number "20". A smaller red YouTube play button icon is positioned in the center of the zero.

2005 / 2025

# AN INNOVATIVE IDEA: EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE

Twenty years ago, YouTube ushered in the arrival of the creator class, a global phenomenon that has revolutionized entertainment and pop culture through its commitment to innovation and collaborative relationship with audiences.

Uploading and sharing video was not a new idea in 2005, but what followed set the stage for an entirely new industry. YouTube's introduction of the Partner Program in 2007, which paid out more than \$70 billion from 2021 to 2023 alone,<sup>1</sup> turned what was once a hobby for enthusiasts into a legitimate career path.

This new creator class spurred the development of a new kind of relationship between entertainers, advertisers and fans. Creators were – and are – people like



Early creators such as Hank and John Green showed how YouTube communities could drive real-world impact by creating events like VidCon and companies like Complexly Media.



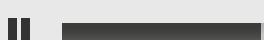
anyone else, granted an audience and a platform not by some third-party Hollywood stakeholder, but earned on their own merits. They shared backgrounds and interests with the audiences that watched them because they had just been a part of that same audience. This new archetype, and the special relationships that it forged between fans and the objects of their fandom, was an accessible path for anyone to walk.

Instead of finding talent, YouTube allowed talent to find itself. And though YouTube started in a garage in California, it quickly made a global impact.

By embracing YouTube's innovative model, Smosh skyrocketed to success and became the first creators to reach both 100,000 and 10 million Subscribers.



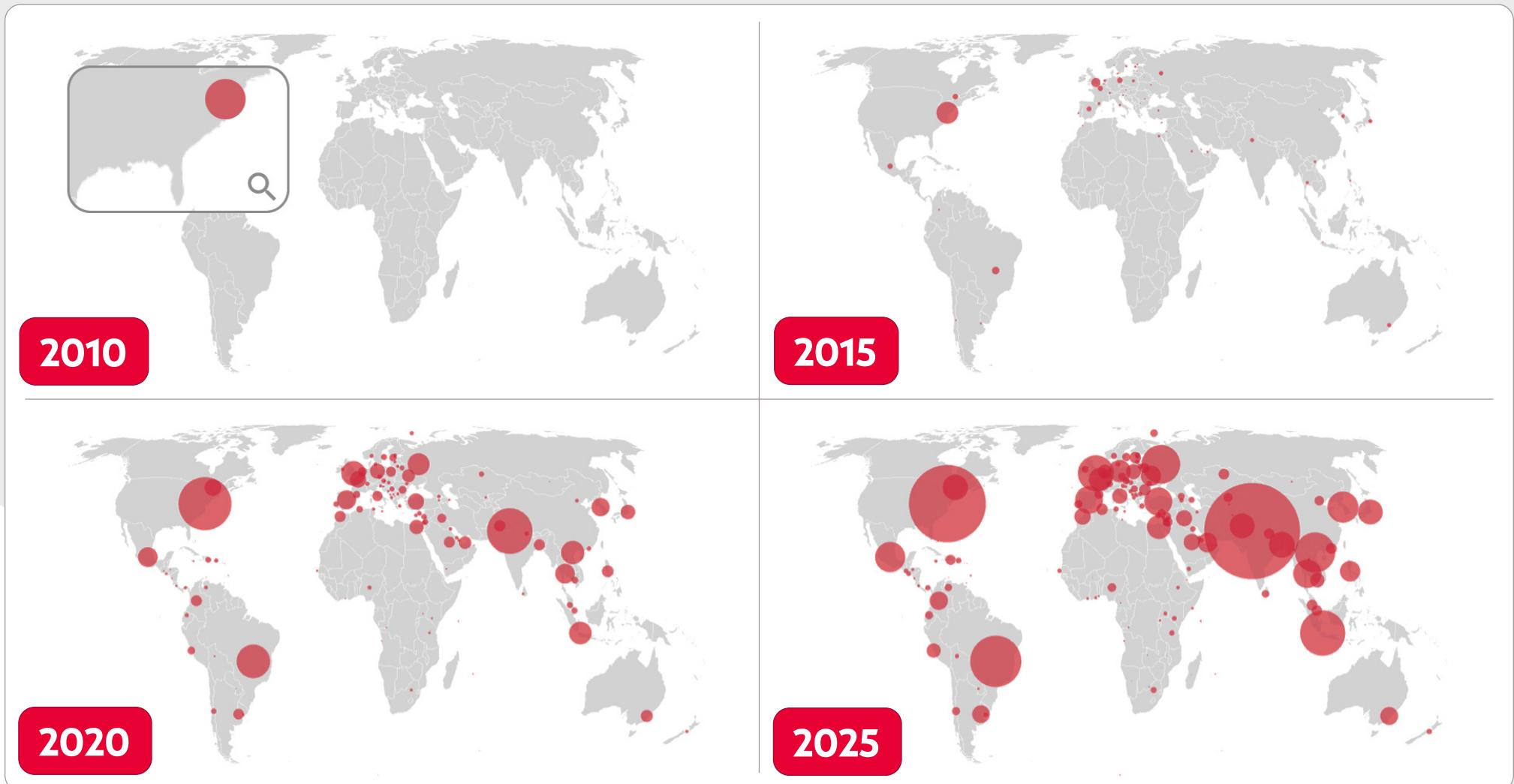
@SMOSH  
26.8M Subscribers



# CREATORS BECOME A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

## GLOBAL DIVERSITY OVER TIME

Creators with 1M subscribers by country/territory



Source: YouTube Data, Lifetime.

YouTube's first channel to hit 1 million subscribers was **Fred** in 2009. Six years later, Indian creators **All India Bakchod** and **The Viral Fever** became the first in India to reach that milestone, marking the beginning of a growing number of creators around the world hitting the 1 million subscriber mark at a remarkable pace. In 2018, Indonesia's **Atta Halilintar** became the first YouTuber in Southeast Asia to hit 10 million subscribers, a moment that solidified YouTube's growing global reach.

YouTube fostered global diversity, enabling people from all parts of the world to join the platform and grow their audiences. This expansion of creators led to equally diverse viewership, with audiences that began locally but soon engaged in a broader, global online culture. These early breakthroughs marked a shift from national fame to international influence. Today, YouTube operates in more than 100 countries and 80 languages.

# ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

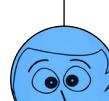
A consequence of this broad global audience is seen in creator milestones. Last year Portuguese footballer **Cristiano Ronaldo** gained over 68 million subscribers in the first three months from the launch of his channel,<sup>2</sup> and the Indian channel **T-Series** has earned an eye-popping 294 billion total lifetime views. This global exposure brings creators an international audience eager to watch their favorite content again and again.

## SUBSCRIBER MILESTONES



@SMOSH

First to 100,000 Subscribers



@FRED

First to 1,000,000 Subscribers



@SMOSH

First to 10,000,000 Subscribers

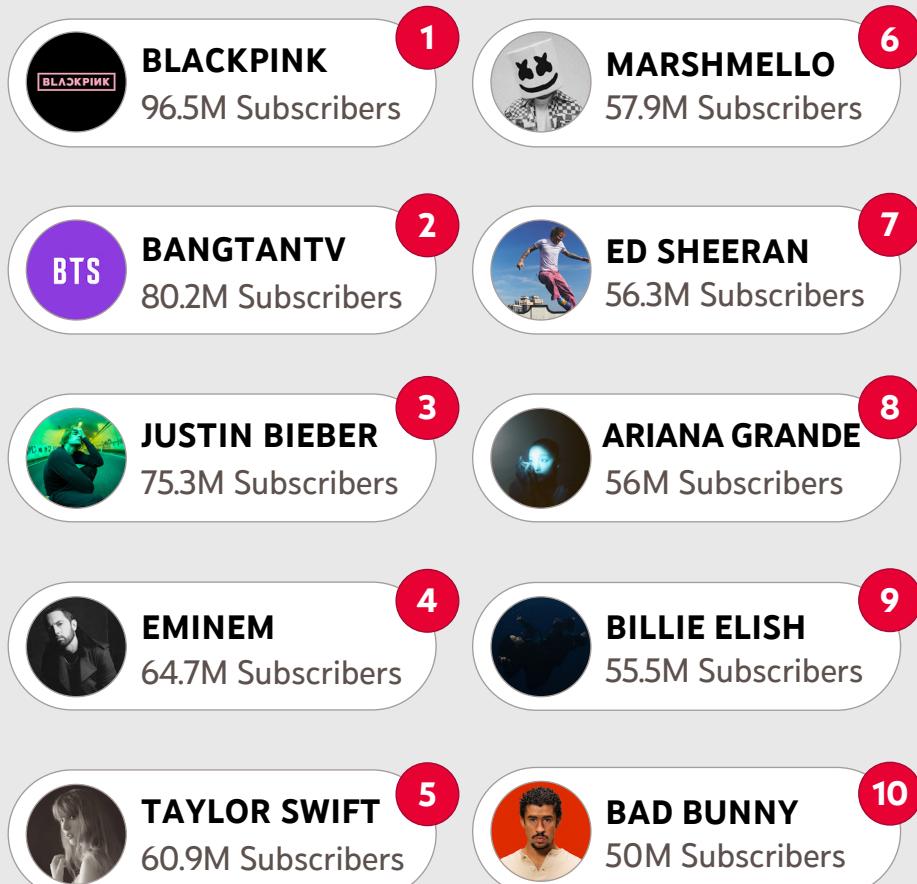


@T-SERIES

First to 100,000,000 Subscribers

Source: YouTube data, Global, Lifetime.

## ALL TIME MOST SUBSCRIBED OFFICIAL ARTIST CHANNEL



Source: YouTube data, Global, Lifetime.

In music, the top 10 most-subscribed channels of musicians are dominated by – what else – “pop”; but notably, the top two belong to K-pop groups **Blackpink** and **BTS**, in that order, highlighting the genre’s massive global reach. The first channels to hit 1 million and 10 million subscribers, respectively, were western creators **Fred** and **Smosh**, but it was India’s **T-Series** that first hit the 100 million subscribers milestone.

Overall, the data is impressive in terms of the individual creators it reflects, but it also serves as a powerful reminder of how increasingly interconnected our cultural tastes have become across borders and genres.

# CREATORS AND VIEWERS BUILD A NEW MAINSTREAM TOGETHER

Creators and their audiences create and consume content in conversation with one another, forming a kind of cultural symbiosis that shapes what's seen and shared on the platform. This ongoing exchange yielded an unexpected innovation: creators refine their work with feedback from loyal viewers, making their content more responsive, polished and primed for mainstream consumption. Audiences initially drawn to creators through shared special interests, stay for the innovative ways those creators explored and expand on those fixations.

Some carved out distinct spaces within established communities such as gaming and beauty, while others broadened the appeal of niche interests, such as ASMR, curated through the platform itself.

**60%**

**of YouTube's 1,000 current most-subscribed channels have uploaded at least one gaming related video.**

Source: YouTube Data, Global, April 2025.

## "LET'S PLAY" VIDEOS TURN VIDEO GAMES INTO ENTERTAINMENT

YouTube turned gaming from a solo activity into a shared entertainment experience. The rise of the "Let's Play" video – where creators film themselves playing and reacting to games – gave audiences a new way to engage with both gameplay and personality. What began in 2008 with creators like **Slowbeef** grew into a global genre, turning players into performers, fostering massive communities and making games into cultural touchstones.

2005

2024

Global uploads of gaming content 2007 to 2024 of videos with "Let's Play" in the title. | Source: YouTube data, Global, 2007-2025.

More views

Fewer views





## VIEWERS INVENT ASMR FROM TINGLES

If there's one thing YouTube creators do best, it's transforming niche content into something widely accessible. Take ASMR, or autonomous sensory meridian response, for example. ASMR is unique in that it was developed from viewers noticing that some videos gave them "tingles" and sharing those videos, which in turn created a community.

Out of that community rose people creating videos with the intent of creating stimuli. It was the community's feedback that shaped ASMR into the art form that it became.

2005

2024

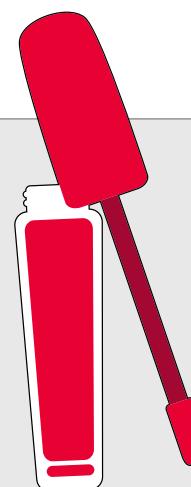
Global views 2007 to 2024 of videos related to ASMR. | Source: YouTube data, Global, 2005-2024.

More views  
▼  
Fewer views

## GET READY WITH ME, THE BEAUTY OF A GOOD STORY

From its earliest days, YouTube has empowered individuals to create content rooted in personal passion, free from industry expectations or conventional ideas of what sells.

One clear example is the rise of the "get ready with me" video, where creators share personal stories or casual conversation while going through their beauty routines. What might not have seemed like a formula for global success became one of YouTube's most enduring formats – loved not only by beauty fans but also by viewers drawn to its intimacy, vulnerability and authenticity.



2005

2024

Global views 2007 to 2024 of videos with "GWRM" or "Get Ready With Me" in the title. | Source: YouTube data, Global, 2005-2024.

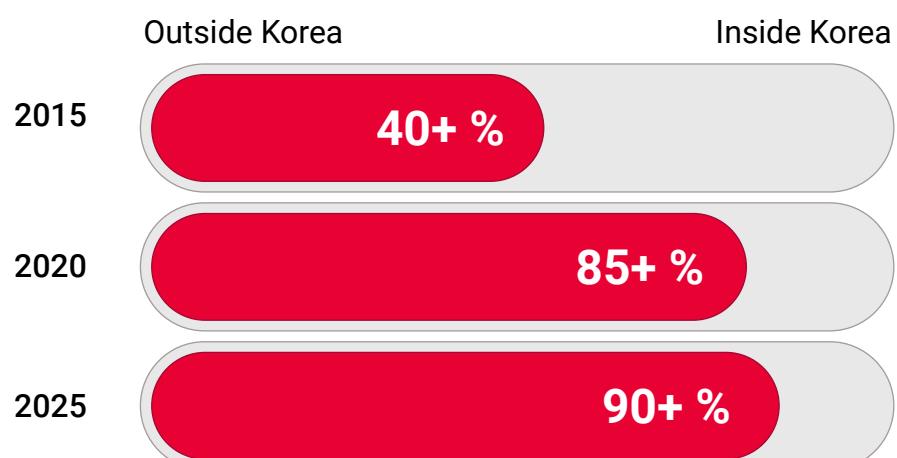
More views  
▼  
Fewer views

# A NEW, GLOBAL MAINSTREAM

YouTube's universal appeal as a direct connection between creators and audiences sparked a seismic shift in how culture is created and shared around the world. Music, movies, television and most pop culture largely stayed within national borders, with global success often requiring major backing. YouTube removed those barriers, making culture instantly accessible across countries and communities.

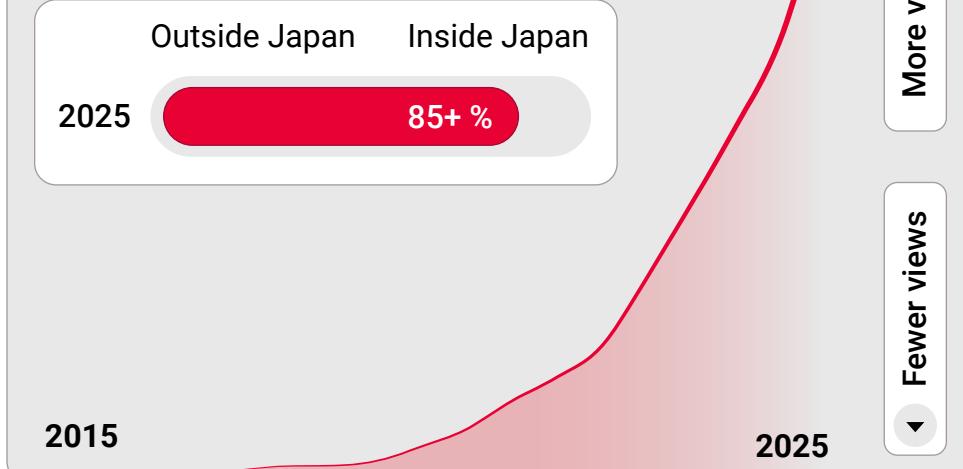
South Korea has been a major cultural force on the platform, from mukbang to "**Gangnam Style.**" The song held the title of most-viewed music video on YouTube for five years and became a bellwether for the rising global popularity of K-pop. In 2025, more than 85% of the combined views for the 10 most-viewed K-pop artists have come from outside South Korea.<sup>3</sup>

## GROWTH OF MUKBANG BEYOND ITS REGION OF ORIGIN



Source: YouTube data, Global, 2015-2025.

## GROWTH OF ANIME BEYOND ITS REGION OF ORIGIN



Source: YouTube data, Global, 2015 - 2025.

Anime has also seen a similar rise in popularity thanks to creators and fans on YouTube. The platform has played a key role in elevating anime music in particular. Eight anime songs have charted globally, six of which reached the top 40 on YouTube's Global Top Songs chart, with two reaching the No. 1 spot.<sup>4</sup>

**Peso Pluma**, a rapper from Zapopan, Jalisco, was a regional favorite before becoming the U.S.'s most-viewed artist on YouTube in 2023.<sup>5</sup> His breakout success reflects a broader trend as Latin creators reach global audiences, bringing regional artists to the world stage.

Creator content now moves freely, crossing borders with ease. Audiences know where to find the content that speaks to them, and when they do, they share. What starts as local now has the power to become global, one view at a time.

# REINVENTING YOUTUBE, REVOLUTIONIZING ENTERTAINMENT

Today, YouTube has billions of monthly viewers who collectively watch over a billion hours of video each day. That staggering figure underscores YouTube's deep role in people's everyday lives: a massive portion of the global population engages with the platform daily.

At this scale, YouTube isn't just shaping entertainment – it's defining it. That definition is constantly rewritten through creator-community collaborations that reflect evolving interests and needs. We see this in more people watching YouTube on TV, its rise as a podcast platform, and the renewed popularity of short-form content – on the platform that started with it. The future of YouTube is the future of entertainment, but more importantly, it's a future we get to build together.

**YouTube leads in streaming watch time every month since February 2023**

Source: Nielsen Total TV & Streaming Report, US, Feb 2023-Dec 2023.

**YOUTUBE CONTINUES TO BE DRIVEN BY CREATION FROM SMALLER CREATORS**

Views for videos with fewer than 100K views vs. more than 100M views



Source: YouTube data, Global, 2025.

**THE VIDEOS WE WATCH ARE GETTING SHORTER AND LONGER**

**▶ Videos under 1 minute**

2012  
2025

More Relative Watch time  
▼ Less Relative Watch time

**⌚ Videos over 60 minutes**

2012  
2025

More Relative Watch time  
▼ Less Relative Watch time

Source: YouTube data, Global, 2012-2024.

# EXPERIENCE 20 YEARS OF CREATORS, VIEWERS, AND YOUTUBE PAVING THE WAY TO THE FUTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

2005



Me at the Zoo becomes the first video uploaded to YouTube.

2006



**@Lonelygirl15**  
183K Subscribers

Lonelygirl15 begins uploading vlog series, providing YouTube's first breakthrough into mainstream pop culture.

**YOUTUBE  
WATCHED 100  
MILLION VIEWS  
PER DAY**

And 65,000 new videos uploaded per day.

2007



**@Tay Zonday**  
1.14M Subscribers

Tay Zonday uploads "Chocolate Rain" becoming a viral sensation for "moving away from the mic to breathe." Tay would become one of the first people to convert his viral success into a long-lasting career as a creator.

2008



2008



Evolution of Dance becomes the first YouTube video to hit 100 million views.

**YOUTUBE  
PARTNER  
PROGRAM  
LAUNCHES.**



2010

**YOUTUBE  
WATCHED  
MORE THAN  
2 BILLION  
VIEWS PER  
DAY.**



**FIRST EVER  
VIDCON.**



**DOUBLE RAINBOW**

All The Way Across The Sky! Uploaded. Jimmy Kimmel tweets about a double rainbow video, turning one man's experience of a natural wonder into a meme that would eventually be a part of a Super Bowl ad.

2011

Rebecca Black's "Friday" gets uploaded to YouTube and becomes the most viewed video of the year and continues to spike every Friday to this day.



2013

Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez, Ashley Tisdale, and friends upload a video of themselves lip-syncing to Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe" unleashing a tidal wave of "Call Me Maybe" videos, turning Jepsen's single into a hit.

2012



"Gangnam Style" becomes the first video to cross one billion views.

YouTube livestreamed Felix Baumgartner's jump from the edge of space back down to earth. Beyond the scientific records, it set a new record for YouTube with more than 8M people watching the livestream at the same time and taking up 8% of the internet's bandwidth.

**@Nyan Cat**  
81.7K Subscribers

The iconic Pop-Tart cat animation, mashed up with a Vocaloid song from Japan, was uploaded, becoming a mascot for the creative ingenuity fostered by our digital culture.

2014



**@Billboard**  
4.03M Subscribers

Billboard's Hot 100 starts incorporating YouTube views in ranking song popularity, meaning that YouTube views propel songs to the top of the charts. Baauer's "Harlem Shake" debuts at No. 1, powered by Harlem Shake, a trend spawned by creator Filthy Frank, who has since become the artist, Joji, on 88Rising.

**YOUTUBE  
REACHES  
1 BILLION  
MONTHLY  
VIEWERS.**



**@PewDiePie**  
110M Subscribers

Becomes the most-subscribed channel on YouTube.



Vogue asks Sarah Jessica Parker 73 questions, launching the series that will become the staple of Vogue's (Conde Nast's) video strategy.



"Baby Shark" uploaded. Today, it's the most-viewed video on YouTube.

2016

First ever charity football match hosted by Sidemen.



**HELLOOO!**

Adele's "Hello" music video released, accumulating over a million views an hour in its first day of release, becoming one of the fastest videos to 100 million views on its way to more than 2 billion views.

2015



**@TheLateLateShow**  
28.3M Subscribers

James Corden hosts Mariah Carey in his first "Carpool Karaoke" video, establishing a signature bit for his "Late, Late Show" grounded in the aesthetics of digital video.

