



CULTURE & TRENDS REPORT

20th ANNIVERSARY

AN ENTERTAINMENT REVOLUTION
20 YEARS IN THE MAKING



2005 / 2025

AN INNOVATIVE IDEA: EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE

Twenty years ago, YouTube's launch paved the way for the global explosion of the creator class. Data reveals it to be a platform that has undergone constant evolution in response to creators and viewers forming an unprecedented, collaborative bond that has been producing tomorrow's entertainment from the very beginning.

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,¹ 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 — everyday people



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.



with creative aspirations but lacking access to the massive infrastructure and audiences of traditional media. They built audiences and a platform not through Hollywood stakeholders, but one video at a time. 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, funded by advertisers, was an accessible path for anyone to walk. It unleashed unimaginable diversity in creativity.

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

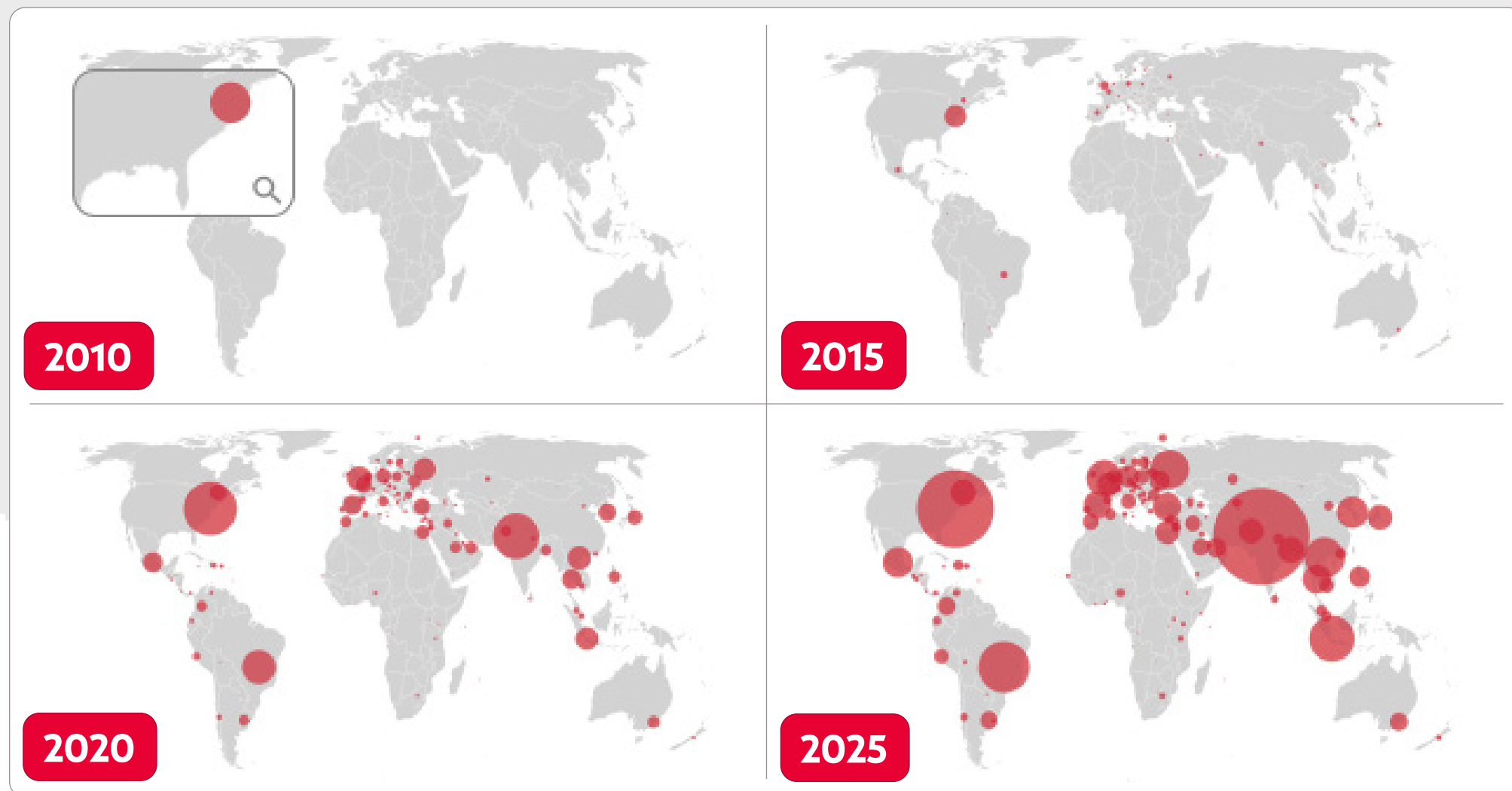


1. Source: YouTube data, Global, Jan 2021 - Dec 2023.

CREATORS BECOME A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

GLOBAL DIVERSITY OVER TIME

Creators with 1M subscribers by country/territory. Larger circles = more creators.



Source: YouTube Data, Lifetime.

Today, YouTube operates in more than 100 countries and 80 languages and its presence has fostered a global media diversity, enabling people from all parts of the world to join the platform and grow their audiences.

YouTube's first channel to hit 1 million subscribers was **Fred** in 2009. Six years would pass before Indian creators **All India Bakchod** and **The Viral Fever** became the first in India to reach that milestone in 2015, reflecting the beginning of a growing number

of creators around the world hitting the 1 million subscriber mark at a remarkable pace. In 2019, 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.

This expansion of creators led to equally diverse viewership, with audiences that began locally but soon engaged in a broader, global online culture, growing the platform's cross-cultural and international influences.




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



Creators transformed 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

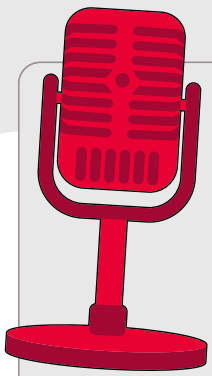
2024

More views

Fewer views

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





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

More views

Fewer views

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



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

More views

Fewer views

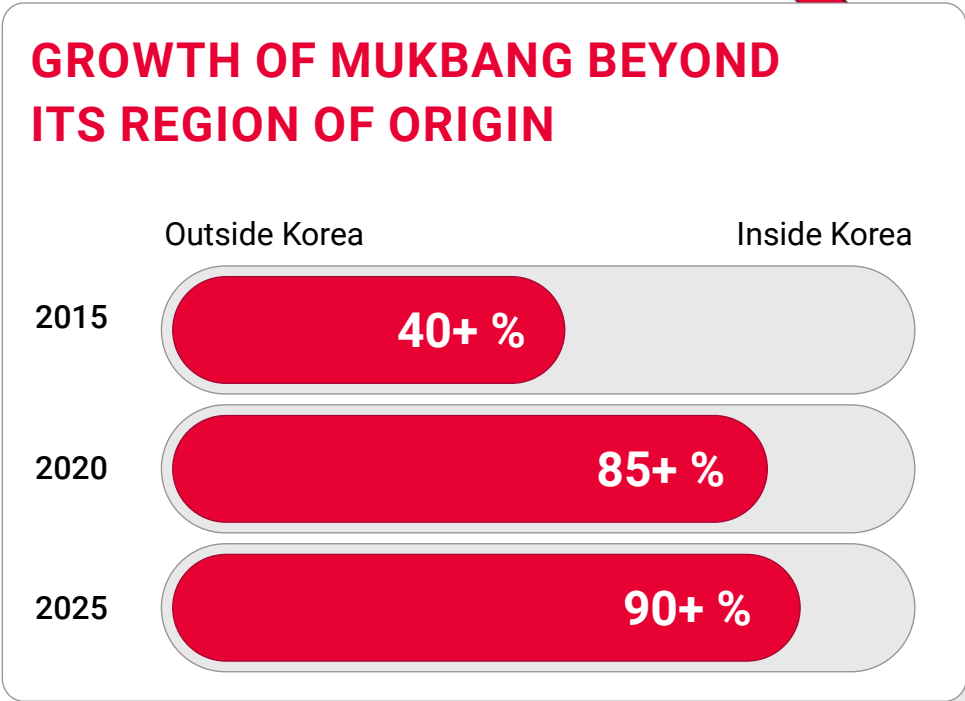
Global views 2007 to 2024 of videos with "GRWM" or "Get Ready With Me" in the title. | Source: YouTube data, Global, 2005-2024.



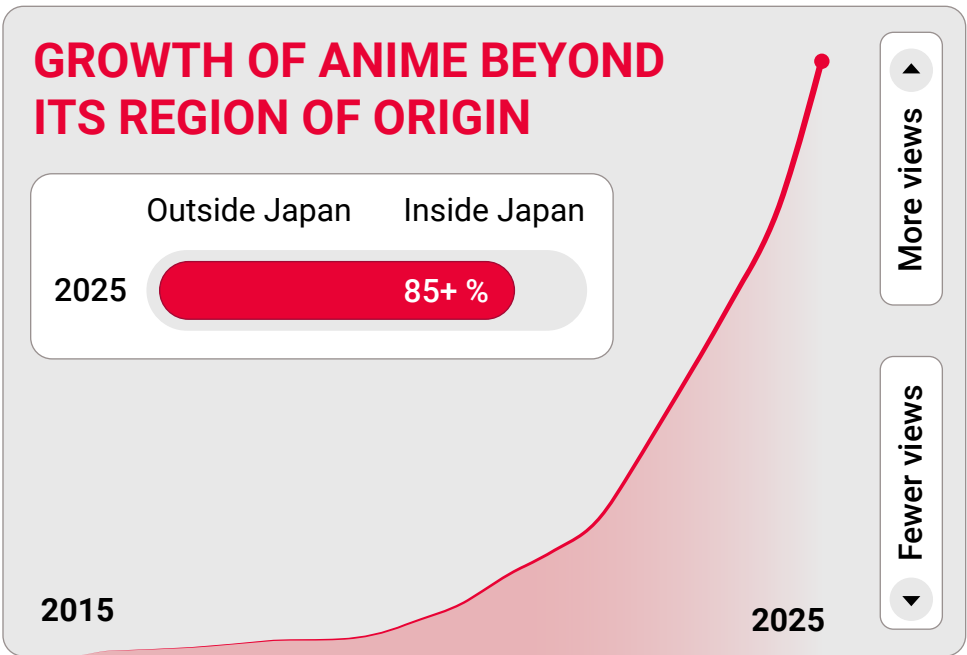
A NEW, GLOBAL MAINSTREAM

Not only did this new direct connection between creators and audiences lead to new genres of entertainment, it sparked a seismic shift in how culture is created and shared, globally. 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.³



Source: YouTube data, Global, 2015-2025.



Source: YouTube data, Global, 2015 - 2025.

Anime’s popularity has grown globally as creators and fans have connected over it. 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.⁴

Peso Pluma, a rapper from Zapopan, Jalisco, was a regional favorite before becoming the U.S.’s most-viewed artist on YouTube in 2023.⁵ 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.



3. Source: YouTube data, Global, 2025. / 4.Source: YouTube data, Global, 2007-2025. / 5. Source: YouTube data, January 1 - October 31, 2023.

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 uses it for entertainment, information and even ambiance, 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. This is evident 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 creators and viewers will build together.

YouTube leads in streaming watch time every month since February 2023

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

VIDEOS WITH NICHE AUDIENCES CONTINUE TO DRIVE VIEWERSHIP

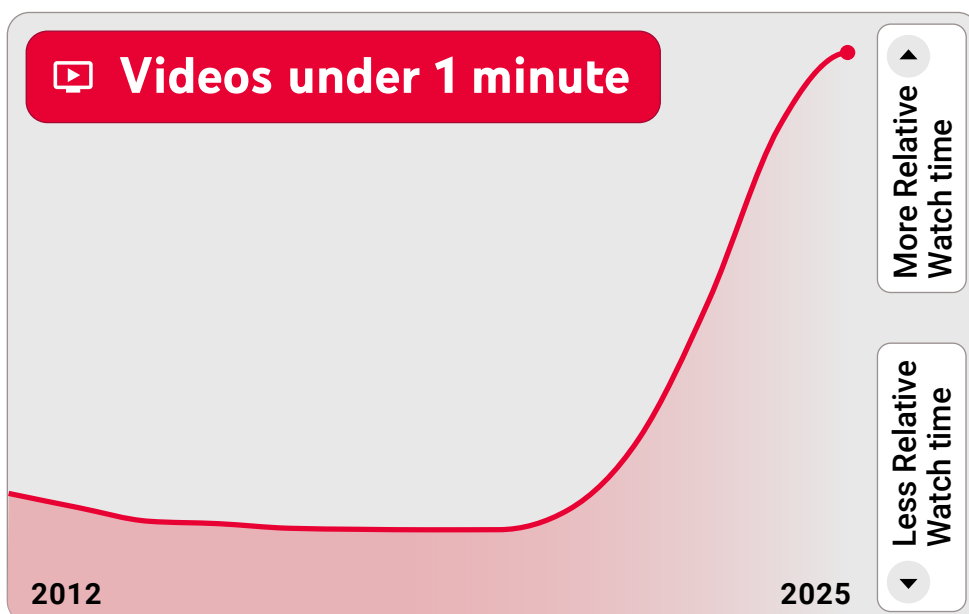
Views for videos with fewer than 100K views vs. more than 100M views



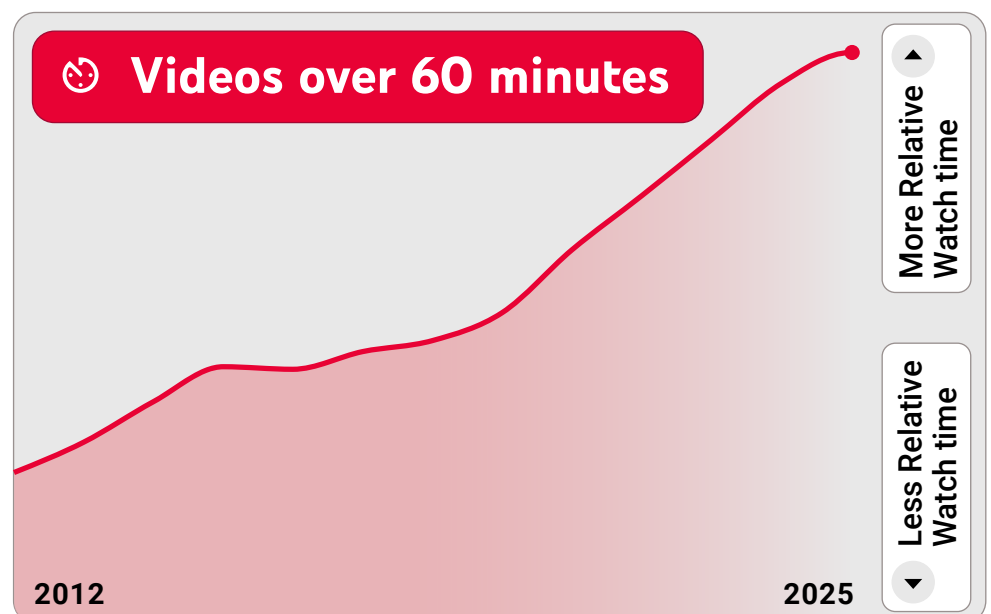
Source: YouTube data, Global, 2025.

THE VIDEOS WE WATCH ARE GETTING SHORTER AND LONGER

Videos under 1 minute



Videos over 60 minutes

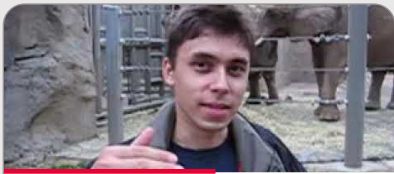


Source: YouTube data, Global, 2012-2024.



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.

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.

**YOUTUBE
WATCHED 100
MILLION VIEWS
PER DAY**

And 65,000 new videos uploaded per day.



2009



@Charles Trippy
763K Subscribers

The birth of daily vlogging when Charles Trippy begins uploading daily vlogs. He has uploaded vlogs every day since, earning himself a Guinness World Record for most consecutive uploads and helping to give birth to the genre of daily vlogging in the process.



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 Rey 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.



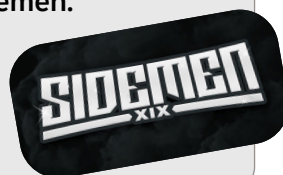
Vogue asks Sarah Jessica Parker 73 questions, launching the series that will become the staple of Vogue's (Conde Nast's) video strategy.

2016



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

First ever charity football match hosted by Sidemen.



HELLOOO!

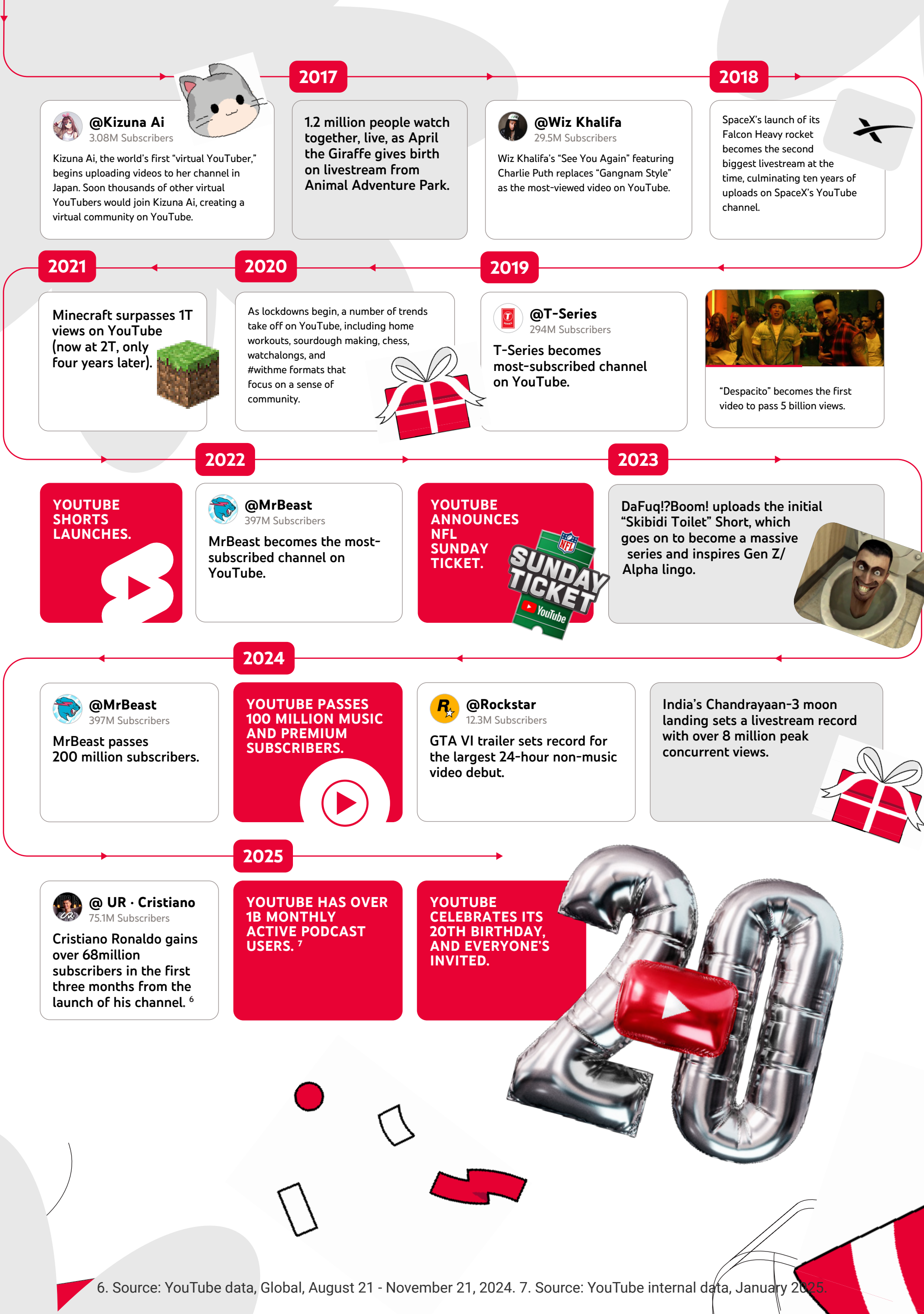
Adele's "Hello" music video released, accumulating over a million views an hour in its first day of release, becoming one of the fastest videos to 100 million views on its way to more than 2 billion views.

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.



2017

2018



@Kizuna Ai
3.08M Subscribers

Kizuna Ai, the world's first "virtual YouTuber," begins uploading videos to her channel in Japan. Soon thousands of other virtual YouTubers would join Kizuna Ai, creating a virtual community on YouTube.




1.2 million people watch together, live, as April the Giraffe gives birth on livestream from Animal Adventure Park.



@Wiz Khalifa
29.5M Subscribers

Wiz Khalifa's "See You Again" featuring Charlie Puth replaces "Gangnam Style" as the most-viewed video on YouTube.

SpaceX's launch of its Falcon Heavy rocket becomes the second biggest livestream at the time, culminating ten years of uploads on SpaceX's YouTube channel.



2021


2020


2019

Minecraft surpasses 1T views on YouTube (now at 2T, only four years later).



As lockdowns begin, a number of trends take off on YouTube, including home workouts, sourdough making, chess, watchalongs, and #withme formats that focus on a sense of community.





@T-Series
294M Subscribers

T-Series becomes most-subscribed channel on YouTube.




"Despacito" becomes the first video to pass 5 billion views.

2022

2023

YOUTUBE SHORTS LAUNCHES.





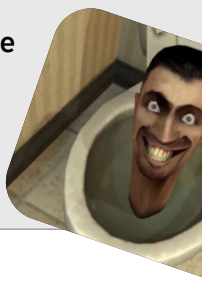
@MrBeast
397M Subscribers

MrBeast becomes the most-subscribed channel on YouTube.


YOUTUBE ANNOUNCES NFL SUNDAY TICKET.



DaFuq!?Boom! uploads the initial "Skibidi Toilet" Short, which goes on to become a massive series and inspires Gen Z/ Alpha lingo.




2024



@MrBeast
397M Subscribers

MrBeast passes 200 million subscribers.

YOUTUBE PASSES 100 MILLION MUSIC AND PREMIUM SUBSCRIBERS.







@Rockstar
12.3M Subscribers

GTA VI trailer sets record for the largest 24-hour non-music video debut.

India's Chandrayaan-3 moon landing sets a livestream record with over 8 million peak concurrent views.



2025



@ UR · Cristiano
75.1M Subscribers

Cristiano Ronaldo gains over 68million subscribers in the first three months from the launch of his channel. ⁶

YOUTUBE HAS OVER 1B MONTHLY ACTIVE PODCAST USERS. ⁷

YOUTUBE CELEBRATES ITS 20TH BIRTHDAY, AND EVERYONE'S INVITED.



6. Source: YouTube data, Global, August 21 - November 21, 2024. 7. Source: YouTube internal data, January 2025.