

Andrew Augustine

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Why I'm leaving YouTube Behind

Another paper. I kind of enjoy writing these if you couldn't tell. In fact, I felt so called to write better papers that I switched to a different medium to improve my writing capabilities. And as much as I do write, I don't write without a purpose. I write to create content, for my readers, or just to put my opinion out in the open. This, by definition, makes me a content creator.

Now, I'm not just a content creator who just makes papers. I also stream games or coding sometimes, make videos, program apps and websites, and I dabble in the art of music making. I make all kinds of content. I've been doing it since I was a young kid, and I plan to be a content creator later on in life, as a career. (Preferably in the programming field but I'll take what life hands me.)

I don't just make this content as a hobby. I seriously invest in what I do to make all my work as good as it can possibly be, using what I have. I recently obtained a laptop to code on, and a Canon Rebel T5i to record video with. I also purchased an HDMI capture card, and the Fruity Edition of FL Studio to make music in. I plan on buying a better computer, and a MIDI controller to make better music with, and I just applied for a job in order to offset these costs.. I'm invested in what I do.

Although as of the time of writing I want to say it's for the fans, that would be a lie, as I have like two true fans right now. The main reason I do this kind of stuff is because I enjoy it. I enjoy being able to put my creativity into something. Whether it be a program, paper, song, or video, I enjoy putting my heart and soul into everything I do.

However nowadays YouTube, the medium that most content creators host their works on, is mistreating the people who help keep it alive. It's this reason, along a few more that make me inclined to leave their platform. For those who don't know, YouTube is a service that was made back in 2005, with the intent of allowing users to record video to "broadcast themselves," as that was the slogan the

company was founded upon. It was a crucial part in internet culture, housing viral trends like PSY's Gangnam Style, to the Harlem Shake, and even more. However, YouTube has been screwing over content creators in these previous months, by creating something we like to call the "Ad-pocalypse."

YouTube is, as most internet tools are, run by advertisements. I mean, someone has to pay the big man to keep the lights on. When they started, they decided to share this profit with their users as well. Creators could upload their content to the service and, if they met the requirements (which most did), they could turn on monetization for their videos to make money off their work. It didn't matter who you were, as long as your videos were not inappropriate enough to receive the age-restriction warning, you could be paid for your content. Content creators then could pay staffers to help with videos, and higher quality content could come from the service. This would attract more viewers, which would allow for more money to make better quality and... You get the point. It was a beneficial cycle between the company and the creators for the service, and everything about it was all hunky-dory and the service was on the up-and-up. That is until the beginning of 2012.

YouTube has gotten greedy, and abandoned their founding principles. I can affirm this by the reasons I found my paper off of today. First, they switched from a "view count" algorithm to one based off of "watch time."^[1] Second, they disabled monetization for users with less than a substantial amount of views. And last but not least, they switched to a new advertiser selection system that's a lot more unnecessarily sensitive.

Let's take a trip down memory lane. First off, the algorithm change. I can understand how YouTube's engineers may have thought that switching to a watch time algorithm would make sense. I mean, as of 2015, the average American watches 6 hours of TV per day.^[2] If they wanted to make this the main way that a person will receive their media, then they need to switch to how long a user is watching the video, rather than someone accidentally clicking onto the page and quickly clicking off. This was mainly an effort to combat a rising problem, called "Clickbait."

According to Merriam-Webster, who to my surprise decided to define this internet slang, the definition of clickbait is: “something (such as a headline) designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest.”^[3] This was a problem arising on the platform, as people exploited the system by uploading videos with false titles. The average user would see this video, click on it, quickly realize that the video isn’t on what it was said to be, and they’d click away. However, the uploader wouldn’t care, as they had already gotten the click that they had wanted. This method was deceptive practice, and although this would be illegal in most other platforms and treated as false advertising, this was allowed on YouTube’s platform. And so, the engineers made the change.

However changing the algorithm to watch time created its own problem. It was like a hydra, or as I, a computer programmer, like to call it: a bug patch. You try and fix one problem only to have two more pop up because of your solution. This change to a watch time based algorithm totally revolutionized the platform and allowed two kinds of content to rule the platform, even to today: gaming videos and compilations. As internet theorist Matthew Patrick put it, these videos dominated because they were “the perfect match. Long videos that could be produced daily and had narratives already built into [them].”^[4] This could be commentary of a video game, or compilations of content that the uploader hadn’t even made! As long as it wasn’t false advertising, it was fair game.

This did create a huge uptick in viewership and attracted the attention of major companies to the platform. More companies were rushing faster than ever to get their ad onto the most recent PewDiePie or BlueXephos video. This is where they committed their first sin. Greed. They took advantage of what they had, and they took this advertiser money to make extravagant places to record videos, called “YouTube Spaces” with millions of dollars in equipment in the most extravagant places on the planet. Their greed eventually sent them to rely on advertisers for revenue, and gave the opportunities for advertisers to start calling the shots.

Advertisers eventually decided that it would be a waste of money to monetize videos on channels with small amounts of views. So... They took that away. And stripped small channels like mine from the ability to make money off our content. Man, that pissed a bunch of people off. They started migrating from platforms like YouTube's to platforms like Twitch. This then discouraged new up-and-coming channels from continuing, and so, the small niche channels that YouTube once prided itself on having, started dying out.

Fast Forward to early 2017. Professional Youtuber and internet comedian, Felix Kjellberg, more commonly known as PewDiePie, starts getting a little edgy. As internet culture develops into this one of offensive comments and racy subjects, (which I'll rant about in its own paper.) Kjellberg tried keeping up with his followers, and changed his content in an attempt to relate to this new generation of viewers. Eventually this got too out of hand, and anti-semitic statements arose on his channel.^[5] He apologized, as this was on accident, and he was punished, but it still sent advertisers into a tumble nonetheless, giving them the perfect excuse to force YouTube into changing their ad policy. This brings us to my third point. They changed the policy to the vague one that remains to today.^[6]

To summarize that drama up, the now Google owned company changed the policy to a super vague version of it originally was, that covered more subjects, and they mistakenly left all judgement up to the advertiser's discretion. This policy went from demonetizing anything specifically targeting someone or a group of people, to one that would demonetize any video that says anything worse than the word "heck." Now, if you've ever been on the internet, you know that people are more, say, colorful with their language. They go "#NoFilter" quite often. And as most content creators on the platform had this use of language... many videos on the platform started getting demonetized.

Now here's the kicker. Because advertisers control the rules, they control whether a video gets an exception or not. Basically, they treat the YouTube environment like it's an economy now. If a video

is believed to “create too much controversy” among the community, the video is taken down. Even if a video very clearly breaks the rules, if it’s getting a ton of views, the advertisers will let it stay.

These double standards can be seen in none other than the events of the recent Las Vegas shooting. Popular video blogger (or vlogger) Casey Neistat created a video for good, stating that all the revenue from the video would go to a charity supporting the victims of the shooting. However, YouTube took the ability to make money off of the video away from Neistat stating that “their policy is to not run advertisements on videos about tragedies.” However, if one was to look at the video of Jimmy Kimmel talking about the exact same subject, sure enough there were (and as of writing, still are!) ads running before the video.^[7]

Alright, back to the present. It’s obvious that the platform is in a rind, and that this is causing the platform to fail. And with the Viner Invasion of 2017, which allowed popular Hollywood teenage celebrities and advertisers to benefit off each other, the quality of content on the platform is quickly degrading. They’re going from videos that once took weeks to work on and had lot of effort and time poured into them, to daily vlogging videos or trend videos with stupid content and (oh, get a load this...) clickbait titles. We’ve come full circle. Back to the same problem that started it all.

The platform still isn’t what it used to be, and I don’t think it ever will be as big as it was. The platform creates too much controversy, and it’s grown too big for it’s own good. Nonetheless, the service is messing up small people like myself, and even big internet sensations like Corridor Digital^[8] and iDubbbz.^[9] We can’t make money off of what we spend our whole lives doing, and it’s starting to scare people away. Like myself.

As of tonight, October 9th 2017, I’m immediately stopping all uploads of my content to the YouTube platform. Although I don’t expect it to become a big trend and all, I still am not happy with the company right now, so I plan to stop using their service. Instead, I’ve switched over to a new service called Twitch, where I can not only live stream, but upload videos of whatever I want to my

page, and reach out to my viewers in a safe way. It also allows me to receive tips and donations from my followers directly, rather than having to get paid through YouTube AdSense bullshit regime. I can also run advertisements on my content there as well for another quick buck or two, but ultimately as a content creator, I call the shots for my content on that platform.

I guess I'll start wrapping up now. In fact, the beginning of this sentence marked me crossing 2000 words, so I won't bore you any longer. I challenge you, the reader, to stop using the platform as often as it may be incorporated in your life, and start moving to other media providers. Switch to actual TV, watching the news and keeping up with the world, rather than watching an infinite amount of videos on the latest fidget spinner trend. Subscribe to your favorite content creators on services like Patreon, so not only do you support your favorite internet celebrities directly, but you get their videos early, or sometimes another gift or two for donating more. Keep your ear open for new services like the Floatplane Club, a service by Linus Tech Tips made to escape the Ad-pocalypse reign of terror. Maybe instead of listening to music on YouTube, switch to a different medium like SoundCloud or Spotify.

It's about time we stop letting YouTube run our lives. That's as content creators and as the consumers. We can show YouTube and other companies just like them that what they're doing is unfair, and at least attempt to boycott them. And with that being said, if you're still reading, please send this to a friend or family member. Get the word out that YouTube is no longer a good platform, and that we should stop using it. Maybe even, if I may be so ballsy to say so, go outside more often and get off the electronics?

...Nah!

My point stands though. Don't use YouTube, and support your favorite content creators directly. Trust me, they'll thank you for it later.

[2273 Words]

Sources:

- [1]: <https://youtube-creators.googleblog.com/2012/10/youtube-search-now-optimized-for-time.html>
- [2]: <http://zenithmedia.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Media%20Consumption%20Forecasts%202015.pdf>
- [3]: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clickbait>
- [4]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9BNqktRdLo>
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