

**Online Communication in the Digital Age**  
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**Lecture – 38**  
**Social Media Entertainment and Media Studies**

Good morning, dear friends and welcome to this module. Continuing the context of our previous discussions, today we shall take up the evolutionary journey of the media and screen industry within the realm of social media entertainment. We shall focus on various platforms also. Social media entertainment stands as a significant milestone in the ongoing evolution of media. These platforms do not only entertain, but also provide us interactive spaces where users can actively shape the landscape of the content. This convergence of technology, communication and creativity showcases the dynamic nature of media evolution as social media entertainment.

## Media Evolution and SME

- Media historian Michelle Hilmes (2009) claims that the historiography of media industry is a *'bold and iconoclastic task'*—equivalent of *'nailing mercury'*.
- 'Mercury is, after all, the messenger, the symbol of human communication; as a substance, it is difficult to pin down but very good at escaping from arbitrary restraints' (Hilmes 2009, 30).
  - The quote draws a parallel between the qualities of mercury (both as a messenger in mythology and as a physical substance) and human communication. It suggests that communication, like mercury, can be difficult to define or pin down precisely due to its dynamic and ever-changing nature. Just as mercury slips through arbitrary boundaries, communication often evolves beyond predefined limits, finding new channels and forms to express itself.



Michelle Hilmes

Source:  
<https://commarts.wisc.edu/>

At the same time, it redefines traditional boundaries and thrusts media into an era of unprecedented connectivity and engagement. Michelle Hilmes, the famous media historian has claimed that the historiography of media industry is a bold and iconoclastic task, and she has compared it with nailing mercury, and I quote, mercury is after all the messenger, the symbol of human communication as a substance. It is difficult to pin down, but very good at escaping from arbitrary restraints, unquote. This quote draws a parallel between the qualities of mercury, both as a messenger in mythology and as a physical substance and human communication.

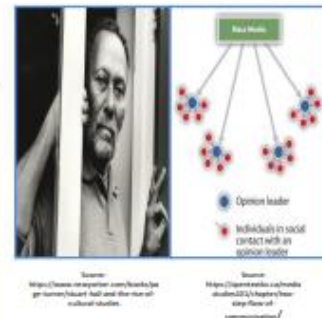
It suggests that communication very much like mercury is difficult to define or to pin down precisely as it is dynamic and ever changing. As mercury slips through arbitrary

boundaries, communication also evolves beyond predefined limits, finding new channels and forms to express human emotions, desires and their futuristic planning. This quote is particularly relevant in the context of social media in today's world. The emergence and evolution of SME platforms show parallels with pivotal moments in media history as they explore uncharted avenues. Initially, the challenge of television to movies represented a major threat to Hollywood's century-long dominion over the content sourcing and its distribution also.

This achievement was possible because of the transformative nature of communication which demonstrated the entertainment industry's adaptability in embracing new mediums and reinventing strategies. In this context, I would refer to the theoretic models of Stuart Hall which remain highly significant in today's context of digital communication. Hall had questioned the traditional models of communication and had focused on the social and political aspects of communication. His models are crucial to our understanding of how content is sourced, distributed and also interpreted by audience in a dynamic manner.

## Stuart Hall (1932-2014): Reception Theory

- Stuart Hall's Reception Theory or Encoding/Decoding theory is a communication model that challenges the traditional view of media messages as static, transparent, and unchanging throughout the process.
- According to Hall, *consumption determines production just as production determines consumption*.
  - Therefore, social and daily experiences can affect the way an audience reads a media text and reacts to it.
- *The Two Step Flow theory* talks about how the 'mass media' reaches and affects people.

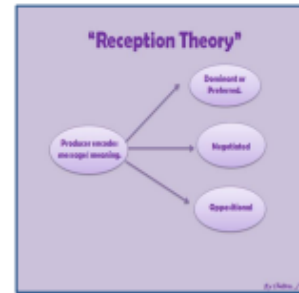


All of us are familiar with Stuart Hall's reception theory or encoding decoding model in a communication. This model challenges the traditional view of media messages as being starting, transparent and unchanging throughout the process. According to Hall, consumption determines production just as production determines consumption and therefore, social and daily experiences of audience can affect the way a media text is read, understood and responded to. The two-step flow theory talks about how the mass media reaches and affects people. The theory examines how media messages are encoded and decoded. The producer encodes messages into their media according to their frame of reference and these messages are in turn decoded by audience according to their own frame of reference.

In the first step, the media influences whom we can term as opinion leaders, individuals whose opinions may affect other and in the second step, the opinion formers share their

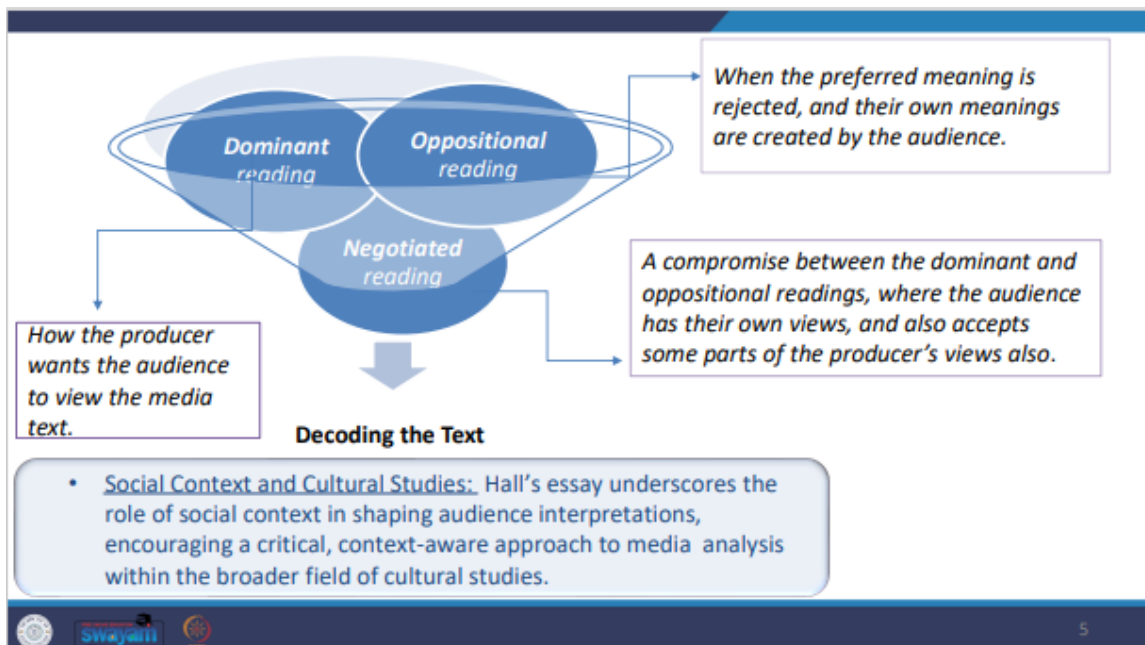
views with others and influence them. The reach has grown exponentially in the context of digital forms of media communication.

- In the year 1973, Stuart Hall presented his model of communication in his essay “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse”.
- Communication Phases and Decoding: Stuart Hall’s essay introduces the concept of *encoding*, *circulation*, and *decoding* in television discourse, emphasizing how audiences actively interpret messages during consumption.
- Decoding Stances: Hall’s model highlights that audiences decode media messages in one of three stances—**dominant reading**, **negotiated reading**, or **oppositional reading**—based on their own backgrounds and perspectives.



Source:  
<https://abdullahimedia.wordpress.com/2013/09/04/reception-theory/>

This 1973 work of Stuart Hall had introduced the concept of encoding, circulation and decoding in television discourse, emphasizing how audience actively interpret messages during consumption. Hall's model has highlighted that audience decode media messages in one of the three ways, dominant reading, negotiated reading or oppositional reading based on their own backgrounds, perspectives and frames of references.



Dominant reading suggests the interpretation which was initially desired by the producer. Oppositional meaning suggests when the preferred meaning is rejected by the audience and their own meanings are created by the audience. The negotiated reading, as the title itself suggests, indicates a compromise between the dominant and oppositional readings. When the audience has their own views but at the same time is willing to accept or exceed some parts of the producer's point of view also. The social context and cultural studies. Hall's essay underscores the role of social context in shaping the interpretations of the audience.

He also encourages a critical context aware approach to media analysis within the broader field of cultural studies. In the context of digital communication, it is the negotiated meaning aspect which can be particularly used to sway opinions. We shall look at it further during our discussions on online bullying also. Hall had opined that for a television program to achieve success and facilitate meaningful communication, there must be a shared comprehension between the creators of the text in the audience and their living rooms regarding the signs and connotative meanings employed in constructing various aspects of the broadcast. Although this theory is centered on television, it provides insight into the digital forms of communications too.

It alerts us to the active role audience plays in decoding messages according to their social context and their ability to collectively reshape messages and pass it further on. This dynamic principle serves as a crucial foundation for the realm of social media and entertainment too, where both content production and consumption converge. Another aspect which we must discuss at this point is that the social network markets are a new definition of creative industries. This point was made by Stuart Cunningham in a 2008 article. His idea of emerging creative industry is based on previously amateur creators engaging in content innovation and media entrepreneurship across multiple social media platforms to aggregate global fan communities and incubate their own media brains. In social media entertainment, audience not only interprets content but also actively contributes to its creation, distribution and discourse, thereby shaping a new era of interactive and collaborative screen experiences.

## Transforming Screen Industries\* and SME

- The emerging shape of screen industries in the twenty-first century shows established players, norms, principles, and practices generating significant power and influence.
- Social media platforms offer scale, technological affordance, and— in some cases (YouTube for eg.), remuneration and upskilling to previously amateur creators.
- This new screen ecology is driven by intrinsically interactive technologies and strategies of **fan, viewer, audience, and community engagement**.



Source:  
<https://msafachd.medium.com/opportunities-in-film-industry-5be324e98920>

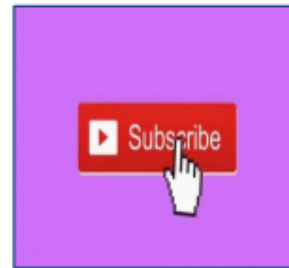
\*Screen industries include tv, film, games, extended reality – VR and AR



When we use the term screen industries, we normally refer not only to the TV and the films, but in today's context, we also incorporate games as well as the extended reality in the form of virtual realities and artificial realities. So, the emerging shape of screen industries today show established players norms, principles and practices generating significant power in influence. Social media platforms offer a scale technological affordance and in some cases, as we can see remuneration too, as well as upscaling to previously amateur creators.

This new screen ecology is driven by intrinsically interactive technologies and strategies regarding fan, viewer, audience and community engagement. Together these factors create a distinct globalization pattern that is rapidly expanding, presenting fresh challenges for existing media companies, creators, regulators and even media researchers.

- This 'industry' is not even two decades old, having started soon after the acquisition of YouTube by Google in 2006, and concurrent with the launch of Twitter.
- By 2017, it saw more than three million YouTube creators globally receiving some level of remuneration from their uploaded content and more than four thousand YouTube professionalizing-amateur channels with at least a million subscribers.
  - The top five thousand YouTube channels have received over two-hundred fifty billion video views in aggregate.
- However, these metrics don't necessarily convert into earnings in a manner comparable to traditional Nielsen ratings\* and television advertising costs per thousand (CPM) rates.



Source: <https://giphy.com/gifs/youtube-subscribers-DTuoQ5ozMpDo62G6>

\*Nielsen is a global leader in audience measurement, data and analytics, shaping the future of media. Measuring behavior across all channels and platforms to discover what audiences love, we empower our clients with trusted intelligence that fuels action.



This industry is not even two decades old, having started around 2006 after the acquisition of YouTube by Google and also concurrent with the launch of Twitter. By 2017, it saw more than 3 million YouTube creators globally receiving some level of remuneration from their uploaded content and more than 4000 YouTube professionalizing amateur channels with at least a million subscribers. However, these metrics do not necessarily convert into earnings in a manner comparable to traditional Nielsen ratings and television advertising costs per 1000 rates.

As we see some creators secure sustainable careers with far fewer views and subscribers, but better engaged fan communities and richer brand levels. We can say that in the era of transforming screen industries and exploring different digital platforms, we witness significant shifts in content production, feedback mechanisms and audience engagement.

- Content is now also being created, often on a larger scale, by prominent "Internet-distributed television" platforms (Lotz 2017) like Netflix, Amazon Video, and Apple's iTunes.
  - These platforms, which specialize in mainstream long-form premium content, have brought about significant alterations in the processes of content production, distribution, and consumption.
- The shift has reshaped viewer preferences and consumption habits, contributing to the evolving narrative of the media industry.
- These portals largely specialize in mainstream long-form premium content supported by sophisticated algorithmic feedback (Hallinan and Striphas 2016).



Ted Striphas

Blake Hallinan

Source:  
<https://www.colorado.edu/cmci/people/college-leadership/ted-striphas>; [https://en.communication.hawaii.edu/people/blake-hallinan?ref\\_id=6](https://en.communication.hawaii.edu/people/blake-hallinan?ref_id=6)

We see that now content is also being created, often on a larger scale prominent internet distributed television platforms like Netflix, Amazon Video and Apple's iTunes. These platforms specialize in mainstream long form premium content and have brought about significant alterations in the processes of content production, distribution and consumption. This shift has reshaped the preferences and consumption habits of viewers and has contributed to the evolving narrative of the media industry.

These portals largely specialize in mainstream long form premium content supported by sophisticated algorithmic feedback. The ascent of digital streaming services has given rise to TV like portals that have gained substantial prominence in building content, consumer relationships and also as we have seen throughout our discussion, social media entertainment has continually been impacted by technological advancements in the field. We shall now discuss about SME 1.0 and SME 2.0, which is time for social media era 1.0 and social media era 2.0. We here use the 2019 work of Cunningham and Creg on social media entertainment to discuss it further. SME 1.0 represents YouTube's early phase, where it aimed to compete with traditional television by offering a mix of PGC that is professionally generated content and UGC that is user generated content.

During this period, YouTube had faced competition from emerging PGC video portals and responded by forming partnerships with content creators and implementing programmatic advertising. In contrast, SME 2.0 saw YouTube facing threats from other social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter and the proliferation of second-generation platforms like Vine, Instagram and Snapchat. Despite these challenges, YouTube continued to evolve into a multi-platform, multi-screen system, emphasizing a video content and introducing multiple revenue streams shared with creators. The key distinction lies in the competitive landscape with SME 1.0 focusing on establishing itself as a video platform and SME 2.0 being characterized by heightened competition and creator empowerment.

## SME 1.0: TV.com

- The efforts of YouTube (started in 2005), to attract premium content from traditional media, were hindered by the emergence of transactional, subscription/ advertiser-based TV-like portals.
  - Portals like iTunes, Amazon, Netflix, and Hulu, presented more financially rewarding opportunities, leading to YouTube's challenges in securing lucrative deals (Lotz 2017).
- Premium and basic cable, as well as broadcast networks, launched their own portals, including HBO (2008), which allow subscribers to watch content on mobile or online, with or without cable or satellite packages.



YouTube was started in 2005 and it started to attract premium content from traditional media. However, these efforts were hindered by the emergence of transactional subscription or advertiser-based TV like portals. Portals like iTunes, Amazon, Netflix and Hulu presented more financially rewarding opportunities leading to YouTube's challenges in securing lucrative deals.

Premium and basic cable as well as broadcast networks launched their own portals, including HBO in 2008, which allows subscribers to watch content on mobile or online with or without cable or satellite packages. On the right-hand side, I have put certain logos of these platforms and the references for that would be incorporated in the reference section. Even sports franchises and leagues, for example, Major League Baseball, have launched their portals extending the value of their brands and content into digital.

- The old Hollywood aphorism 'content is king', occludes the political economy truism that, if content is king, then distribution is *King Kong* (Cunningham and Silver 2013).
  - And the two biggest online content distribution gorillas are Netflix and YouTube.
    - Together, they constitute more than 50% of primetime US online viewing. Netflix and YouTube are alike in numerous ways. Both are world-spanning platforms.
- YouTube's platform is uploaded to and streamed around the world, with the exclusion of China, North Korea, and at any one time some countries in the Middle East and northern Africa.

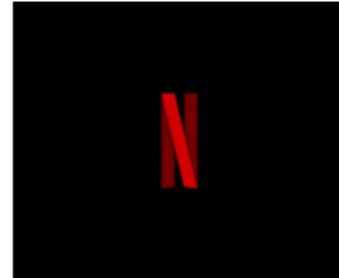


Source: <https://www.constant-content.com/content-writing-service/2018/03/content-distribution-strategies/>



The old Hollywood aphorism that content is king occludes the political econometriism if content is king, then distribution is King Kong. And the two biggest online content distribution gorillas are Netflix and YouTube. And together they constitute more than 50% of primetime US online viewing. Netflix and YouTube are alike in numerous ways, as both are world spanning platforms. YouTube's platform is uploaded to and is streamed around with the exclusion of China, North Korea, and at any one time, certain countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Netflix is by and large a mainstream video store available online and populated uniformly by professionally generated content.

- Netflix refers to itself as the 'world's leading internet TV network' which speaks to its dominant position in the digital entertainment landscape.
  - This designation reflects Netflix's comprehensive range of TV shows, movies, documentaries, and original content available for streaming,
    - capturing the essence of traditional television programming
    - also offering the convenience of online access.
- Netflix's innovative approach to distributing its original content through binge-watching has propelled it to the forefront of internet-based television networks.



Source:  
<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/792915078153229949/>

Netflix refers to itself as the world's leading internet TV network, which speaks to its dominant position in the digital entertainment landscape. The designation reflects Netflix's comprehensive range of TV shows, movies, documentaries, and original content available for streaming. This innovative approach to distributing its original content through binge watching has propelled it to the forefront of internet-based television networks. The term binge watch was incorporated in Collin's English Dictionaries, and it became the word of the year in 2015. It allows viewers to access entire seasons of shows at once, eliminating the traditional weekly episode release. Audience can watch multiple TV show episodes in one

sitting without any break.

- The rise of on-demand streaming platforms like Netflix, Hulu, and others contributed to the popularity of binge-watching.
- The term “binge-watch” was Collins English Dictionary’s word of the year in 2015 (alongside, out of curiosity, “dadbod” and “ghosting”).
  - Netflix revolutionized TV consumption by allowing viewers to access entire seasons of shows at once, eliminating the traditional weekly episode release.
- Raymond Williams' concept of television "flow" underscores the deliberate scheduling and narrative orchestration employed by networks to sustain viewer engagement - a strategy that has evolved with binge-watching in the streaming age, reshaping audience interaction with television content.

Source: Starosta, J., & Izydorczyk, B. (2020). Understanding the phenomenon of Binge-Watching—A Systematic Review. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(12), 4469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124469>

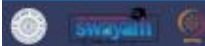


Source: <https://daily.jstor.org/critical-theory-binge-watching/>

The rise of on demand streaming platforms like Netflix, Hulu, and others contributed to the popularity of binge watching. Raymond Williams' concept of television flow underscores the deliberate scheduling and narrative orchestration employed by networks to sustain viewer engagement, a strategy that has evolved with binge watching in the streaming age, reshaping the audience interaction with television content. Raymond Williams had argued that broadcasting introduced a fundamentally different experience to the discrete activities of say reading a book or watching a play by unifying different forms of communication into a singular continuous flow. This concept could also help us to understand different developments in digital communication. In order to locate this idea into today's context, let us look at a short video to understand why people indulge in binge watching.



Source: BBC Ideas. (2020, March 24). Why do we binge-watch? / BBC Ideas [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apzuu8\\_g4js](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apzuu8_g4js)



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Hello. Binge started by accident. Netflix had realized that loads of people were gravitating towards watching shows in bulk, be that shows that you've seen before, Friends, Seinfeld, Law & Order, ER. That's the surprise about it. It's led by the consumer. The way that Netflix tries to nudge you to watch more, it's very subtle little tricks.

They work out very quickly when a show launches, which thumbnail is working, why. Also, getting to the very end of an episode and immediately the credits, they minimize it right to the corner of the screen straight away and automatically load for next episode. That's how you sometimes get sucked into watching a show for three hours without even noticing. I have found that people are deeply embarrassed by how much they watch TV, deeply embarrassed to not be productive and take time off and say, actually I watched six hours of television today because I needed to not look at five different tabs on a work computer.

I just needed to... We also binge to be part of the public conversation. Yeah, lovely bag. So, I think there is an anxiety about being caught up about this content, which is forcing people to binge more also. When we can identify with a character, it leads to the release of the love hormone, oxytocin.

It creates a bond. We have had such a wonderful morning. A series like Big Little Lies, which allows you to look at the same event through the eyes of very different characters. You're bound to be able to find a character that you can relate to and go on the journey with. If you ever have touched my little girl like that again, you're going to be in big trouble.

Hey. If we're making time to watch a series end to end, we are potentially creating hours of space to work with our emotions, our relationship. What makes Netflix stand out so well? There's a fact that they're able to really experiment with the number of characters that are in, the number of story arcs. Netflix knows that you're never going to watch a show mid-war. Netflix knows that you're never going to watch a show mid-way through.

You're never going to start in the middle. You're always going to start from the very beginning. So that's why you've got *Oranges for New Black*, which has a cast of about 40. So you're able to have that level of depth over an eight hour series than what you would normally do if it was separated into eight 60 minute chunks shoved on a linear broadcast channel.

The video discusses the phenomenon of binge watching, exploring its origin, psychological factors behind it, as well as its impact on individuals. It also highlights the role of platforms like Netflix in shaping formats of storytelling and acknowledges the evolving perception of binge watching.



Source: <https://tenor.com/search/binge-watching-gifs>



Source: <https://www.salon.com/2020/01/04/why-im-resolving-to-quit-binge-watching-tv/>

- Driven by consumer preferences, binge-watching, is encouraged by platforms like Netflix; through techniques such as automatic episode loading.
- While societal expectations of productivity can lead to embarrassment, binge-watching facilitates social participation and emotional engagement by fostering connections with characters.

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Driven by the consumer preferences, binge watching is encouraged by platforms like Netflix through techniques such as automatic episode uploading. While societal expectations of productivity can lead to embarrassment, binge watching facilitates social participation and emotional engagement by fostering connections with characters. Jason Mittel had commented in 2016 that Netflix operates more akin to a technology driven entity rather than a traditional media brand. This distinction is underpinned by the recognition that Netflix vital assets extend beyond content alone and they encompass its expensive user base as well as the wealth of invaluable data amassed in relation to its customers. We should draw comparisons with another popular SME, YouTube, at this point.

## SME 1.0: YouTube History

- YouTube's name is straight forward.
  - The “You” represents the user-generated content, and “Tube” represents the original term for television.
  - In his account of the platform’s history, Hank Green claimed that even a decade later, ‘YouTube remains a mystery, especially to itself ’ (Green 2015b).
- The nature of noncommercial/precommercial content on the platform has become a key topic in media, communication, and cultural studies scholarship, alternatively described as ‘vernacular creativity’ (Burgess 2006), ‘produsage’ (Bruns 2008), and ‘amateur media’ (Hunter et al. 2013).



Source: Fast Company



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As we can make out, YouTube's name is straightforward and the nature of non-commercial or pre-commercial content on the platform has become a key topic in media communication and cultural studies scholarship being alternatively described as vernacular creativity, produces an amateur media. Its monetization strategies have exposed the codependency between media and advertising reflecting the limitations of traditional ways related with advertising. It also highlights the affordances and targeted efficacy of online analytics.

- Through their channel initiatives, YouTube seemed to be *emulating television*, in terms of both its search for premium content and its dependence upon advertising revenue.
  - For many industry pundits and academic scholars, YouTube seemed poised to become yet another media content industry.
- José van Dijck mentions: ‘[T]he distinctiveness of YouTube as an alternative to television was no longer defensible, particularly when we look at the site’s content’ (van Dijck 2013).



Source: <https://history-computer.com/how-to-change-your-billing-and-payment-settings-on-youtube/>



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Through various channel initiatives, YouTube seemed to be emulating television in terms of both its search for premium content and its dependence upon advertising revenue and for many academic scholars, it seemed poised to become yet another media content industry.

During 2010 to 2014, the emergence of numerous second-generation web-based platforms and mobile applications further heightened platform competition in the SME landscape.

## SME 2.0: The Upstart Startups

- The key players include *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, *Twitch*, and *Periscope*. These second-gen platforms scaled at speeds in some instances faster than their first-gen predecessors.
  - The most recent platform, Snapchat, was dubbed the ‘fastest growing platform’ in 2015 with over 200 million users, surpassing Twitter in daily usage (Morrison 2015).
- Like their antecedents, these platforms featured rapid iteration of technological and commercial features, most notably convergence around video.



Source:  
<https://www.figma.com/community/file/915990135266060551/SnapChat>

The key players include Instagram, Snapchat, Twitch and Periscope. These second-gen platforms scaled at speeds in some instances faster than their first-gen predecessors. Like their antecedents, these platforms featured a rapid iteration of technological and commercial features, most notably convergence around video. Video is what optimizes platform monetization. And therefore, generates hopes for potential sustainability beyond venture capital investment grounds. Besides, mobility also features prominently as Instagram, Periscope and Snapchat are applications that have user interfaces that harness the mobility and technological affordances of mobile phones.

- Most notable among these second-gen platforms are Snapchat and Instagram.
- In contrast to YouTube and live broadcasting, Snapchat also offers features that are short-lived, disappearing from view after twenty-four hours.
  - In addition, the platform integrated social networking limited to invited users only.
- As Gary Vaynerchuk (2016) notes, Snapchat provided affordances that rapidly lured teen users, a separate platform walled off from their parents, who had started to use Facebook, featuring content that evaporated every day.



Gary Vaynerchuk  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary\\_Vaynerchuk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Vaynerchuk)

Most notable among these second-gen platforms are Snapchat and Instagram. In contrast to YouTube and live broadcasting, Snapchat also offers features that are short-lived disappearing from view after 24 hours. It has provided affordance that rapidly lured teen users as Gary Vaynerchuk has commented in 2016. It is a separate platform walled off from their parents who had started to use Facebook, featuring content that evaporated on a daily basis.

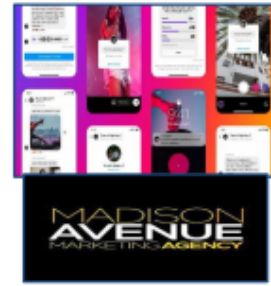
- Snapchat has introduced a **'freemium'** model for some of its features, offering users the chance to purchase branded filters for photo and video.
  - "Freemium" is a business model that offers a product or service for free (the "free" component) while also providing the option for users to upgrade to a premium version with additional features, functionalities, or benefits (the "premium" component). The term itself is a combination of "free" and "premium."
- While Snapchat has no revenue-sharing deals in place with its creators, savvy *Snapchatters* seeking to monetize their content can still earn significant income on branded content deals.



Source: <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-negative-aspects-of-a-freemium-business-model>

Snapchat has also introduced a freemium model for some of its features, offering users the chance to purchase branded filters for photos and videos. While Snapchat has no revenue-sharing deals in place with its creators, savvy Snapchatters seeking to monetize their content can still earn significant income on branded content deals. We should also discuss another platform, Instagram, which is situated centrally nowadays among SME platforms.

- According to Mediakix (2017), a media marketing firm, 'Instagram commands a \$1B influencer economy', which is projected to be a \$5–10 billion market in near future.
- Instagram's photo-sharing capacity has lent itself more readily to the image-oriented and 'brand-safe' verticals of beauty, lifestyle, and design.
  - This close alignment of affordance and content type has seen waves of Instagram creators engaging in influencer marketing sponsored by Madison Avenue brands, products, and services.
- Steeped in the tech culture of constant iteration, the platform has pivoted repeatedly to update user interfaces, tweak user and creator affordances, and monetize the platform in lock-step with Facebook.

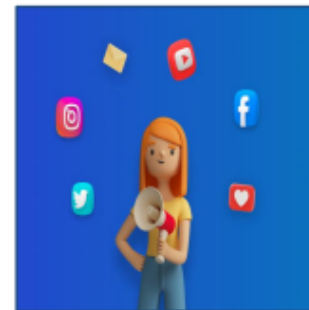


Source: <https://www.businessinsider.in/instagram-is-the-new-facebook-2017-08-01-1028848002>  
<https://www.madisonavenue.com/>

Stepped in the tech culture of constant iteration, this platform has pivoted repeatedly to update user interfaces, tweak user and creator affordances and monetize the platform in lockstep with Facebook. The first two points mentioned in this slide tell us about the financial aspects of this particular platform. These changes included the introduction of a short-form video player dedicated to lure users of Wine app. The platform also introduced its own version of Instagram stories coupled with ephemerality to more effectively compete with Snapchat.

## SME 2.0: Multiplatform Wars

- In response to the introduction of second-generation platforms, first-generation platforms adopted a variety of strategies to address the heightened competition.
- Well-capitalized through investment, advertising, and IPOs, *Facebook* and *Twitter* engaged in multiplatform acquisition and accelerated feature enhancement.
- Nonetheless, these efforts have achieved varying levels of integration and degrees of success and have not guaranteed sustainability.



Source: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/2017/11/08/what-generated-the-hype-about-second-generation-social-marketing-1028848002>

In response to the introduction of second-generation platforms, first generation platforms also adopted a variety of strategies to address the heightened competition. Well-capitalized



through investment, advertising and IPOs, Facebook and Twitter engaged in multi-platform acquisition and accelerated feature enhancement. Nonetheless, these efforts have achieved varying levels of integration and success. Instagram and Facebook operate as separate platforms, but in fact, they are partially integrated.

- Partially protected under the Facebook corporate umbrella, Instagram has operated like a startup despite securing massive global scale.
  - A dual platform system creates economies of scale and also offers a suite of technological features that appeal to separate groups of users and, in turn, creators.
- Facebook had hired a new management team that relaunched Instagram in 2016 with the purpose of directly emulating the features of its competitors.
  - The platform introduced short-form video and an ephemeral Insta-stories feature that could be chosen to erase content every day, along with branded photo filters.



Source: <https://techcrunch.com/2016/08/02/instagram-stories/>

Partially protected under the Facebook corporate umbrella, Instagram has operated like a startup despite securing massive global scale. Facebook had hired a new management team that relaunched Instagram in 2016 with the purpose of directly emulating the features of its competitors, introducing the concept of short-form videos and ephemeral Insta stories features. The result has contributed to the accelerated growth of Instagram.

- Facebook also continues to add new features.
- In 2014, Facebook embedded its own video player, featuring an autoplay mechanism that causes videos to play while scrolling down the Facebook wall.
- Since 2015, Facebook has solidified its convergence on video with the launch of *Facebook Live*.
- The platform's acquisition of virtual-reality headset manufacturer *Oculus VR* for \$2 billion is indicative of its long-term plans for the development of live video content.



Source: <https://time.com/tag/oculus-rift/>

Facebook also continues to add new features. For example, in 2014, it embedded its own video player and since 2015, it has solidified its convergence on video with the launch of Facebook Live. The platform's acquisition of virtual reality headset manufacturer Oculus VR is indicative of its long-term plans for the development of live video content.

- In mid-2015, Facebook launched its Suggested Videos to feature branded content videos from an array of main media companies like *CNN* and the *New York Times*, sports leagues like the *NBA*, as well as film studios and television networks.
  - Gradually, these partnerships have included new digital and social media intermediaries, like *Tastemade* and *Funny or Die*, along with a limited array of premium content creators.
- With advertising partnerships available or imminent, Facebook has emerged as a viable video platform for most creators and intermediaries.



In mid-2015, Facebook launched its suggested videos to feature branded content videos from an array of main media companies like CNN and the New York Times, sports leagues like the NBA, as well as film studios and television networks. With advertising partnership available or imminent, Facebook now has emerged as a viable video platform for most creators and intermediaries.

- We can also refer to some views which critically comment on the policies regarding what actually counts as a *Facebook video view*, and its importance for content creators and advertisers.
- An American vlogger Hank Green, in a 2015 blog post titled '*Theft, Lies, and Facebook Video*', noted that Facebook measures anything longer than three seconds as a 'view' (regardless of sound), including those videos that have played automatically in someone's news feed as they scroll past.




At this moment, we can also refer to some views which critically comment on the policies

regarding what actually counts as a Facebook video view and its importance for content creators and advertisers. I would refer to the comment of an American blogger Hank Green who in a particular blog post posted in 2015 had noted that Facebook measures anything longer than 3 seconds as a view including those videos that have played automatically in someone's news feed as they scroll past. Another platform we must comment on is the famous Amazon.

## Amazon's Evolution into Multiplatform Video Services

- Amazon's history emulates Google/YouTube by offering multiplatform services through launch and acquisition that competed with digital portals like iTunes and Netflix for PGC and social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook for UGC.
  - These were value-added services that complemented Amazon's core value proposition as the world's largest e-commerce sales platform and were successfully integrated into their parent platform.
- In 2006, Amazon launched *Amazon Unbox*, its first video platform, which was later renamed as *Amazon Instant Video* (and later just *Amazon Video*).



Source: <https://www.engadget.com/2006-09-07-amazons-unbox-video-download-service-goes-live.html>

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Amazon's history emulates Google or YouTube by offering multi-platform services through launch and acquisition that competed with digital portals like iTunes and Netflix for PGC and social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook for UGC. In 2006, it launched Amazon Unbox, its first video platform which was later renamed as Amazon Instant Video and later just Amazon Video. This service ultimately added a streaming subscription video demand service.

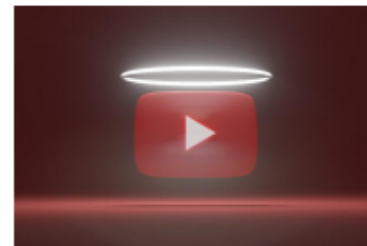
- Over the ensuing years, Amazon has engaged in an original content strategy to more effectively compete with native and traditional media portals like Netflix and HBO.
  - Amazon’s original series, like Transparent, have secured great critical acclaim, including several Emmy Awards.
- The platform has expanded into films, as well as reality formats, including the acquisition of the world’s most successful format reality series, Top Gear.
  - These strategies have positioned Amazon as one of the most powerful, deeply capitalized tech firms with the potential to threaten Hollywood incumbency.



Over the ensuing years, Amazon has engaged in an original content strategy to more effectively compete with native and traditional media portals like Netflix and HBO. This platform has expanded into films as well as reality formats including the acquisition of the world's most successful format reality series Top Gear. We have already mentioned YouTube during our earlier discussions today. Let us now go back to it and review some recent changes which have been introduced to keep pace with technology driven new expectations of audience and to keep pace with the competitors. This would help us in understanding the total picture of SME 1.0 and 2.0.

## SME 2.0: YouTube(s)


- Like its first-generation competitors, YouTube continues to pivot at a rapid pace.
- It integrates and evolves new features, including several attempts at integrating social networking affordances.
- Additionally, it launches multiple platforms, effectively morphing into its own multiplatform ecology: YouTube(s).



Source:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/08/technology/youtube-music-industry.html>

Like its first-generation competitors, YouTube continues to pivot at a rapid pace. It integrates and evolves new features including several attempts at integrating social network affordances. Additionally, it has launched multiple platforms effectively morphing into its own multi-platform ecology, YouTubes. These strategies are multilateral and designed to compete with the PGC portals of Netflix and Amazon and compete with other social media focused platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Twitch.

- You Tube has engaged in a multilateral multiplatform strategy to compete with Hollywood and digital media portals for traditional entertainment content.
- *YouTube Red* was launched in late 2015.
  - It is an ad-free subscription service claiming to enable access to 95% of existing platform content, replicating PGC platforms.
- *Red* helped address a series of concerns faced by YouTube. It was designed to stop the new windowing strategies offered by subscription platforms like *Vessel* and *Vimeo Plus*.
  - Windowing emulates a traditional media licensing practice, effectively offering subscribers a “sneak peek” without advertising, typically for the span of a few days or weeks.



Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/>

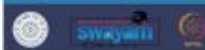
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YouTube Red was launched in late 2015 which is an ad-free subscription service. Red helped address a series of concerns faced by YouTube and it was designed to stop the new windowing strategies offered by subscription platforms like Vessel and Vimeo Plus. Windowing emulates a traditional media licensing practice effectively offering subscribers a sneak peek without advertising typically for the span of a few days or weeks. This service also created another revenue stream for creators who offer an unspecified amount of time could make their content available on their original platform with advertising.

- As a 'walled garden' behind a subscription interface, *YouTube Red* can more reliably compete with portals like *Netflix*, *Amazon*, *Hulu*, and traditional television to incubate and exploit its own intellectual property.
  - To do this, it engages the services of top-level creators who conceive, develop, and produce the content in exchange for split revenues and paid fees.
- YouTube has also ventured into competition with streaming music platforms like *Spotify*, *Pandora*, and *Apple Music*.
  - *YouTube Music* is included with a subscription to *YouTube Red*, a bundling strategy comparable to cable television packages and *Amazon Prime*.



Source: <https://techhacks.com/youtube-music-premium/>



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As a walled garden behind a subscription interface, YouTube Red can more reliably compete with portals like Netflix, Amazon, Hulu and traditional television to incubate and exploit its own intellectual property. It has also ventured into competition with streaming music platforms like Spotify, Pandora and Apple Music. It has also launched a separate YouTube gaming platform perhaps in competition with Amazon Switch.

- YouTube has also launched a separate *YouTube Gaming* platform.
- This provides recorded let's-play videos, trailers, and reviews from the top gaming channels, along with live streaming of console, computer, or mobile device gaming.
  - YouTube has integrated a *Live* button on its platform to compete directly with the wave of new live platforms like Twitter's Periscope.
- Finally, the *YouTube Kids* app represents a curated, child-friendly platform designed to lure younger viewers while offering greater parental supervision.



Source: <https://www.gametutorials.com/streaming/youtube/>



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It provides recorded Let's Play videos, trailers and reviews from the top gaming channels along with live streaming of console, computer or mobile device gaming. Finally, the YouTube Kids app represents a curated child-friendly platform designed to lure younger viewers while offering greater parental supervision. It allows YouTube to respond to various children's media policy regulations such as COPPA that is the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. YouTube has made significant investments in collaborating with content creators through various initiatives.

- Collaboration includes dedicated creator "Spaces" located in Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, New York, São Paulo, Berlin, Mumbai, Paris, Toronto, and Dubai.
- Additionally, they have established numerous pop-up spaces globally.
- YouTube has also introduced programs like the 100 Channel initiative and the Next Up competition to further support and nurture creators.
  - YouTube provides viable advertising split revenue partnerships through pre-roll and other browser-based advertising and sponsored content.

Source: YouTube Creator Hub. (2012, November 27). Welcome to YouTube Space LA [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dm5i6F13e5I>

This collaboration includes dedicated creator spaces located in different countries and they have also established numerous pop-up spaces globally. It has also introduced programs like the 100 channel initiative and the NextUp competition to further support and nurture creators. Social media entertainment has a profound impact on the media landscape and is also fast emerging as a new global market.

## Conclusion

- Social media entertainment has a profound impact on the media landscape.
- The analogy drawn between communication and mercury, coupled with Stuart Hall's reception theory, highlighted the ever-evolving nature of content and its dynamic interaction with audiences.
- Platforms like Netflix, YouTube, Instagram, and Amazon have reshaped content creation, distribution, and consumption paradigms.
- This transformative journey underscores the integral role of communication, user engagement, and future technology in driving the ongoing evolution of media, solidifying social media entertainment's position in the trajectory of contemporary digital media.

The analogy drawn between communication and mercury coupled with Stuart Hall's reception theory highlights the ever-evolving nature of content and its dynamic interaction with audience. Platforms like Netflix, YouTube, Instagram and Amazon have reshaped content creation, distribution and consumption paradigms. This transformative journey

underscores the integral role of communication, user engagement and future technology in driving the ongoing evolution of media, solidifying social media entertainment's position in the trajectory of contemporary digital media. Continuing our discussion on digital media and platforms, we shall discuss digital storytelling in the next module. Thank you.