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Role of New Media and Digital Technology in Growth and Development of Travel Vlogging as a New Method of Content Creation: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Media always plays an important role in shaping the social and cultural trends in our society. Mass media and mass communication have been used throughout the ages by different individuals, groups or societies for expressing their views, opinions, or some creative work to their public or audiences. From earlier forms of media to modern forms, the journey has been a long and interesting one. Blogging started as a new avenue where different internet users could share their creative ideas, stories, poems, articles and features on the online platform. Writers and authors soon started using blogging extensively and many common people also started to do the same to connect to readers and audiences who can easily access their contributions on the online platform. But gradually with time, internet and computer kept on evolving much more. Social sites like Blogger, Orkut slowly became famous but soon newer platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube came to the market. Now from writing content making video content came to the scene. Anyone using the internet could do this. There are different genres on which content is created and video blogging is done on YouTube on sometimes on social media sites like Facebook also. The different forms include art and crafts, cookery, education, technological but the most famous Vlogging has been definitely of the travel video blogging. Many individuals who loved travelling and exploring places have turned their passion into profession. This research paper focuses on the use of New Media and digital technology by travel vloggers and how this phenomenon is turning into career profession for many people. Media has always been an integral part of our society; likewise this new trend of travel vlogging and creating a niche audience with the help of New Media has been indeed a subject of study and critical analysis for media researchers and scholars.

Keywords

New Media, Blogging, Vlogging , Travel Vlogger, Social Media, Convergence.

Introduction

Media always plays an important role in shaping the social and cultural trends in our society. Mass media and mass communication have been used throughout the ages by different individuals, groups or societies for expressing their views, opinions, or some creative work to their public or audiences. Since the birth of media there have been continuous growth and evolving of the forms of

mass media. From earlier forms of media to modern forms, the journey has been a long and interesting one. From Newspaper to radio, television, computer, smartphone and today's modern day digital technology enabled New Media; the journey saw different changes at different points of time. Since the inception of computer and internet, Blogging started as a new avenue where different internet users could share their creative ideas, stories, poems, articles and features on the online platform. Writers and authors soon started using blogging extensively and many common people also started to do the same to connect to readers and audiences who can easily access their contributions on the online platform. But gradually with time, internet and computer kept on evolving much more. Social sites like Blogger, Orkut slowly became famous but soon newer platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube came to the market. Now from writing content making video content came to the scene. Anyone using the internet could do this.

With the birth and growth of smartphone technology video blogging or vlogging as it is nowadays known became more popular day by day. YouTube especially became the most prominent platform for video content creators who now found easier to connect to their audiences. YouTube channels are required to be created by the users on which different video content can be uploaded. YouTube also shares a part of revenue with the users, and this revenue-sharing model have indeed made it one of the most successful content creation platforms of this era. Many young people as well as creators of all ages have now professionally started running YouTube channels as a means of their livelihood. There are different genres on which content is created and video blogging is done on YouTube on sometimes on social media sites like Facebook also. The different forms include art and crafts, cookery, education, technological but the most famous Vlogging has been definitely of the travel video blogging. Many individuals who loved travelling and exploring places have turned their passion into profession. They have turned into full time travel vloggers and content creators and many of them have indeed successfully turned this into reality. This research paper focuses on the use of New Media and digital technology by travel vloggers and how this phenomenon is turning into career profession for many people. Media has always been an integral part of our society; likewise this new trend of travel vlogging and creating a niche audience with the help of New Media has been indeed a subject of study and critical analysis for media researchers and scholars.

Literature Review

The different New Media technologies cover a wide range of web-related communication technologies like online social networking sites, blog, online social networking and different kind of social media forms (Friedman & Friedman, 2008). Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) have focused on the message (communication and practices), technology and social context where it is used. According to Gitelman and Pingree (2003), the temporal approach have been used and the term "media in transition" to describe the time period where emergent new medium is going to give a competition to existing media forms.

Manovich (2002) has defined new media as "cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition." New media is always updating itself with the daily inventions in the sphere of digital technology. If the two forms of media that is the old media and new media are compared, one term that obviously comes to the forefront is the convergence due to digital technology. In old media newspapers, radio, television all existed as individual media tools which could be used by its users. But with the emergence and improvement of digital technology, now all those media can be used in new media platform of smartphone or computer with the help of convergence of Media technology.

The most important feature of New Media which must be mentioned is the interactivity feature due to which the user's interaction with the source of message is much easier now. Voithofer (2005) has contrasted the new and old media in terms of certain parameters which mainly include the newness of new media. According to him the production technology have changed due to convergence of the digital technologies, storage system have changed due to the digitization process, presentation and distribution of content over the telecommunication network have also changed considerably. Blogs are a self-styled form of presentation by different users on the Internet and video blogs or vlogs have emerged in the new media scenario with the help of social sites like YouTube.

In today's age of new media and digital technology with advancement in the field of broadband internet and video sharing sites like YouTube online content creation and sharing them with the audiences have become easier than ever. As the slogan of YouTube itself says "one can now broadcast yourself"(Garfield,2006). Garfield (2006) mentions that now in the traditional gatekeepers are not present who can filter which content or vlogs the audiences will be able to see or not. Travel vlogging is indeed a very much valuable part of today's media scenario as it helps content creators for self-expression and presentation to the audiences.

YouTube was founded by Chad Hurley, Steven Chen and Jawed Karim in June 2005 with very little known to the users and fans. Burgess and Green (2009) in their book, YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture have mentioned that "YouTube aimed to remove the difficulties and technical barriers in widespread sharing of video online, as YouTube provided with a very simple integrated interface in which any user with little knowledge about the technicalities could easily upload and share their video content to the audiences". There was the competition of YouTube with other video sharing platforms but after Google acquired the site for an amount of \$1.65 billion in October 2006, the growth of the company was rocketed ahead (Burgess and Green,2009).

According to Morreale (2014), the site was steadily gaining much more increasing popularity, and consistently it ranked among the top 10 visited sites globally. Almost after a decade YouTube is the world's third most popular online destination and it is available in 61 languages and also million advertisers are on the platform (Luscombe, 2015). Kim (2012) wrote, "If the pre-Google era of YouTube is characterized by user-generated amateur videos, post-Google phase is characterized by professionally generated videos in an advertisement friendly environment." YouTube now is indeed a much professional organization with advertisers playing a key role in generating profit for the organization. The policy of monetizing content has helped many users to turn their hobby into source of income for them.

Objectives of Research

1. To assess and analyze the role of New media and digital technology in travel vlogging by content creators on YouTube.
2. To find out the impact of digital technology in the content creation and presentation by users on online platform.
3. To find out the changes from blogging to video blogging or vlogging with the help of New Media tools and technologies.

Research Question

1. How the genre of travel vlogging on social sites like YouTube has developed with the advent of digital technology and new media?
2. What are the different ways in which amateur video content creators manage their YouTube channels and other sites which are now much more professional profit making organizations?

3. How the content creators design their video blogs and plan the creation and presentation and how they generate money from them?

Research Methodology

This research paper conducts qualitative research methodology in analyzing the contents related to the subject of this research. The research uses textual analysis of the different video content created and presented by the content creators and vloggers on the internet and sites like YouTube which shares the platform for them. The main aim of this research study is to find out the ways and means by which the vlogging or video blogging has emerged as a new medium for vloggers to express and present themselves to the audiences.

The main role of video sharing platform YouTube is analysed in this research study. In the textual analysis of the content, five travel video blogs from three different vloggers have been taken. The method of simple random sampling has been used in this research for selecting the units of textual analysis. The travel vloggers selected for the study are from India and their travel vlogs showcases different methods of presentation and different tools and techniques used by them. Proper and In-Depth textual analysis of the vlogs helps to reflect the social and cultural message that the video contents carry with them.

Discussion and Analysis

1. **Varun Vagish (Mountain Trekker):** Founder of Mountain Trekker travel channel on YouTube in 2007. Today, Varun Vagish is one of the top rated Indian travel vloggers and his YouTube channel has more than 1 million subscribers. Dr. Varun Vagish is an Indian travel vlogger who holds a Ph.D. degree in Mass Communication, and even quit his highly respectable government job to pursue his career as a full time travel vlogger. Through his travel processes he has covered more than twenty nations and also uploaded more than four hundred videos in his channel. He has covered different countries like USA, Canada, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Serbia, Thailand, and Bali, Kirgizstan, Italy, Turkey, Russia and many others. Varun's videos have influenced many for travelling and exploring the world according to their own ways. He was also ranked the best Indian vlogger on YouTube in 2021, and also he was awarded by the Government of India for National Award from Government for promotion of Tourism.

Video 1(Canada Series 2018, #Episode Number-4/19): "Visiting the Canadian side of Niagara Falls in Winter."- 19K Likes, 654,689 views , Date of Upload: April 12, 2019.



Figure 1: Screenshot from Mountain Trekker YouTube Channel

In this video blog the vlogger focuses on his tour to Niagara Falls on the Canadian Side and explains in the video the details. The vlogger showcases the natural beauty of the Niagara Falls and especially since the time was winter season, the continuous snowfall was a cherish to watch even as

viewers. Also, he gave the details of the hotels where to stay and also the boat ride which one needs to take for the Niagara falls visit. Since the place is a dream destination for many travellers and tourists all around the world, this video blog is indeed a good job done by the vlogger, his style of presentation is also very nice and humble in nature.

Video 2 (USA Series 2018, #Episode Number-9/30): “Washington DC day trip, Tourist attractions, Best way to visit DC.”- 13K Likes, 518,713 Views, Date of Upload: June 27 2018.



Figure 2: Screenshot from Mountain Trekker YouTube Channel

In this video the vlogger shares his day trip experience in and around Washington DC, which is the capital of United States of America. The vlogger shows his public transport travel from Virginia to Washington DC and also used Metro Railway to travel from Springfield Franconia to Smithsonian station. The video then shows the viewers the Washington Monument, National Mall, Holocaust Museum, White House and other important attractions nearby. The vlogger shares how budget travels can be done abroad even by couchsurfing and hitchhiking and using public transport. Through this type of Vlogging the viewers sitting at their homes far away can get the feel of travelling in faraway countries. Indeed his style of presentation is very much natural.

Video 3 (Russia Series 2017, #Episode Number-13/24): “How friendly are Russians!- Couchsurfing in Russia.”- 19K Likes, 586,282 Views, Date of Upload: Nov 1 2017.



Figure 3: Screenshot from Mountain Trekker YouTube Channel

Video blogging in travelling has indeed been a very interesting part of YouTube videos since its inception. In this video also Varun who is the vlogger shares an important part of his journey. In this vlog he is staying at the place named Biysk, Russia. The social and cultural exchanges of the place are very much inherited in this video. He does couchsurfing in this video, which is basically living with locals at their home and eating in their style instead of living in hotels. This process indeed travelers can learn a lot about the local culture, food and lifestyle of the particular place, which cannot be done living in hotels. Through this vlog the Russian hospitality of the Indian vlogger can be seen, and interesting process of travelling is found out.

Video 4 (Bali Series, Indonesia 2017, #Episode Number-3/6): “GayatriMantri in Bali(Bike rentals, Ubud, Tanah Lot).”- 6.7K Likes, 341,302 Views, Date of Upload: December 23 2017.



GAYATRI MANTRA IN BALI (Bike rentals, Ubud, Tanah Lot) - DAY-2

341K views • 4 years ago



If you have any other query feel free to ask at - www.facebook.com/groups/touristhelpline (It may not be possible for me to answer ...)

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Figure 4: Screenshot from Mountain Trekker YouTube Channel

In this video blog the beautiful culture of Bali Island, Indonesia have been portrayed by the vlogger. Bali is an unique island where 85% of the population belong to Hindu religion while Indonesia as a country is a Muslim majority nation. In this vlog Varun who is the presenter of the vlog nicely captures the beautiful nature of Bali Island as also the Hindu cultural traits of the place. The guide is seen reciting the most pious Gayatri Mantra in the bus, and also through this vlog one can see the local Hindu temples, the Batik traditional art and also about the coffee plantation. Indeed through this vlog beautifully the culture of the place have been reflected.

Video 5 (Egypt Series, 2018, #Episode Number-8/11): “An Indian in Egypt, Nile River, Luxor temples, Egypt trains, Bollywood Fans.”- 12K Likes, 615,364 Views, Date of Upload: April 28 2018.



An Indian in Egypt | Nile River | Luxor temples | Egypt Trains | Bollywood fans

615K views • 3 years ago



If you have any other query feel free to ask at - www.facebook.com/groups/touristhelpline (It may not be possible for me to answer ...)

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Figure 5: Screenshot from Mountain Trekker YouTube Channel

Since the main target of this vlogger like many other is to show how budge trips can be done all around the world. In this video we can see how he crosses the beautiful Nile River on a public boat in very cheap rate. Also, in many public tourist places, many touts and agents are there who indeed hassle people very much, and likewise this place was also like that, and though the vlog it is seen to us at the West Bank. The local cultural trends can also be seen through this video, as many people there Bollywood fans and we can know the social and cultural interest of those places. The local food Koshari, Roz Belaban and Fool could also be seen in this vlog which makes it interesting indeed. The train journey from Luxor to Cairo and the famous Tahrir square can also be seen from this video.

Mohit Manocha (Travelling Desi): Founder of YouTube channel Travelling Desi, in 2018 this YouTuber has indeed made rapid progress in his channel since 2018. Within three years of starting the channel he has travelled more than twenty five countries and uploaded more than five hundred and

sixty travel videos in his YouTube channel. He has more than fourteen lakh subscribers in his channel and due to style of presentation indeed he has become the second most popular Indian travel vlogger on YouTube. Mohit was an IT entrepreneur but became a full-time travel vlogger and currently he has moved to Canada.

Video 1 (Bangkok Pattaya, Thailand Series, 2019, #Episode Number-1/10): “How to plan a Bangkok Pattaya Trip in Rs.35,000 including Flights, Visa, Hostels, Parties and Food.”- 25K Likes, 1,320,179 Views, Date of Upload: March 29 2019.



Figure 6: Screenshot from Travelling Desi YouTube Channel

This video is indeed a very nice and informative vlog through which the vlogger gives a detailed outlook of the entire tour of Bangkok and Pattaya in a very budget travel way. In this video blog it is seen how in 7 days entire Bangkok and Pattaya trip can be done withing INR 35000 rupees. It also included the Visa and Air ticket details. The vloggers showcases different beautiful cultural sides of the places including the local cuisine food, the night life in Bangkok and Pattaya, Pub Crawl, Grand Palace trip, Wat Pho temple and its surroundings, the local transport are very nicely portrayed in this video. This vlog is a complete package for anyone who aims to do a budget trip to Bangkok and Pattaya, Thailand.

Video 2 (Cuba Road trip Series- An Indian in Cuba! 2020, #Episode Number-9/15): “JahaNaai Se Kasai Tak. Sab Sarkari ho.. Cuba Ka Havana!” – 23K Likes, 418, 549 Views, Date of Upload: December 2 2020.



Figure 7: Screenshot from Travelling Desi YouTube Channel

In this video blog the vlogger captures the life and times of the historical and beautiful Cuban city of Havana. This video also explains the social and political situation in life in Cuba, and why it is indeed different from the rest of the world. The old and fascinating streets of Havana, the ration shops

of the city, the life that is present in the city. Due to the political difference with the USA, Cuba has been facing many curbs and international sanctions on this Island nation. But still how this nation and its Government provides free education from Kindergarten to University level, provides Government subsidy in ration and many other things indeed beautifully reflected in this vlog.

Video 3 (A budget trip to Switzerland from India Series 2018, #Episode Number-1/9) : “Switzerland in Rs 75000/- 10 Days 10 Cities- A budget trip from India – All You need to Know.”- 109K Likes, 2,942,308 Views, Date of Upload: Premiered December 13, 2018.



Figure 8: Screenshot from Travelling Desi YouTube Channel

In this video blog Mohit who is the blogger beautifully narrates the journey in Switzerland. Though Switzerland is one of the most beautiful places in the world, but it is one of the most expensive countries as well. In this video the vlogger completes ten days journey in ten different cities of Switzerland within a very budget range of seventy five thousand Indian rupees. He covers the beautiful cities like Interlaken, Saanen, Grindelwald, Gimmelwald, Murren, Lauterbrunnen, Bern, Lucerne Gstaad among others. Also, the vlogger explored Switzerland in a rented Audi Car which he drove from Zurich to Geneva. In this video many things from hotels, Railways passes and other transport details, food ,mountains, outdoor activities, nightlife many things have been shared for the audiences.

Video 4 (Belgium Budget Travel Series, 2019, #Episode Number-5/8): “Train Journey to Beautiful city Ghent – Belgium’s pretty cities.” – 3.5K Likes, 84,737 Views, Date of Upload: Aug 1 2019.

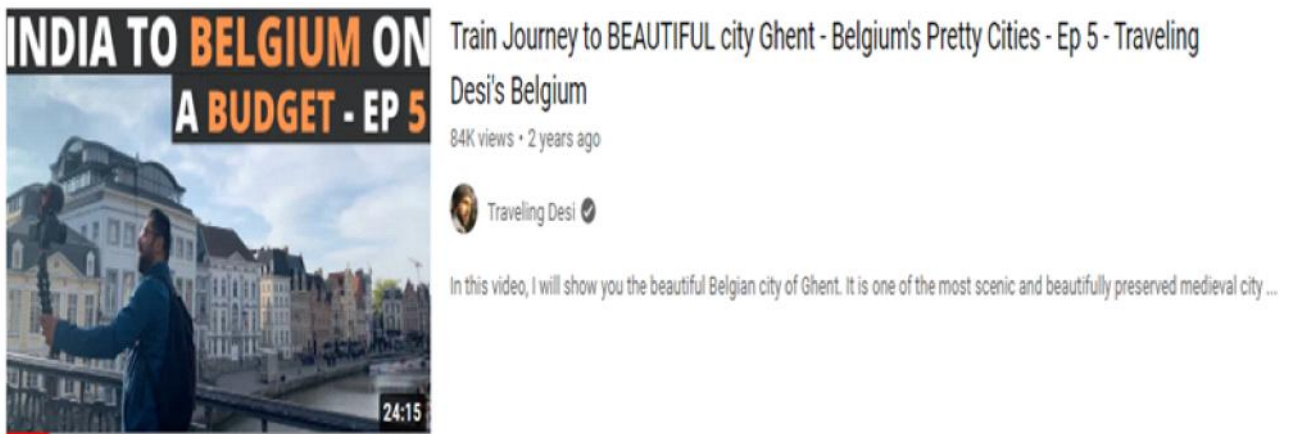


Figure 9 : Screenshot from Travelling Desi YouTube Channel

In this video blog the Indian travel vlogger Mohit shows the very scenic and beautiful Belgian city of Ghent, which is indeed a very much scenic and medieval European city which has been beautifully preserved. It is also one of the most popular tourist destinations Western Europe including Belgium. By the train journey from Brussels the vlogger reaches this place and also helps the viewers to find out how on cheap budget, hostels and living accommodation, and even the local train and other transport facilities. This video also shows the activities and events that the tourists can do in this place. This

video perfectly carves out the cultural heritage of Belgium and Europe as well as gives a travel budget for the viewers.

Video 5 (Paris Budget Travel Series, 2018, #Episode Number-5/6): “Paris Hostel Room Sightseeing Using Public Transport only- The Best places to see in Paris in a day.” –8.5K Likes, 205,088 Views, Date of Upload: May 24 2019.



Figure 10: Screenshot from Travelling Desi YouTube Channel

Like in every other vlog in this vlog also, the vlogger travels and explores the beautiful city of Paris in France. The city streets, the shops, the monuments, the art galleries, the accommodation hostels, the food, the shopping malls everything are perfectly shown in this vlog. For every viewer he also nicely shows the public transport facilities including railway and buses for travelling in the city. This Paris series indeed perfectly portrays the city’s minute details.

Deepanshu Sanghwan (Nomadic Indian): Founder of the YouTube Channel Nomadic Indian, this young travel vlogger is no doubt one of the best Indian vloggers on YouTube. He hails from Maharashtra and after doing job for few years he started travel vlogging since 2017. His channel motto is- “Live the life you always dreamed of!” Actually he indeed covered more than twelve countries in the past three to four years and his vlogs indeed inspired many young travelers all over India to travel the places they have always wanted.

Video 1 (Nomadic Indian in Sri-Lanka Series 2019, #Episode Number-13/20): “Ashok Vatika and Sita Temple- NuwaraEliya, Sri Lanka.”- 57K Likes, 2,316,905 Views, Date of Upload: April 13 2019.

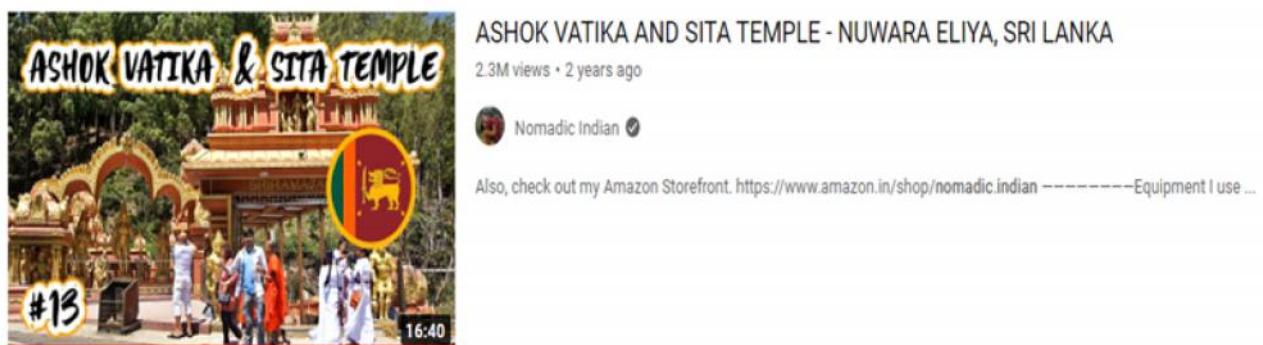


Figure 11: Screenshot from Nomadic Indian YouTube Channel

In this video blog the vlogger covers the historical important place of Ashok Vatika and Sita temple in the place called Nuwara Eliya in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is indeed a beautiful country to visit for everyone. The Island nation has indeed many hidden treasures in different parts of the country.

Deepanshu who is the vlogger for this channel narrates the story related to the famous Ashok Vatika temple where Mother Sita was kept by Raavana after kidnapping her as per the Ramayana, and also Lord Hanuman came to meet Mother Sita in this very temple. In this vlog vlogger shows the beautiful Hindu-Buddhist cultural assimilation in this place where Buddhist people are also visiting the Hindu temples. Sri-Lanka is a Buddhist majority country but the beautiful religious harmony and cultural harmony is a nice thing to learn from this vlog.

Video 2 (Nomadic Indian in Mongolia Series 2019, #Episode Number-4/20): “Naadam- National Festival of Mongolia.”- 6.7K Likes, 166,636 Views, Date of Upload: October 3 2019.

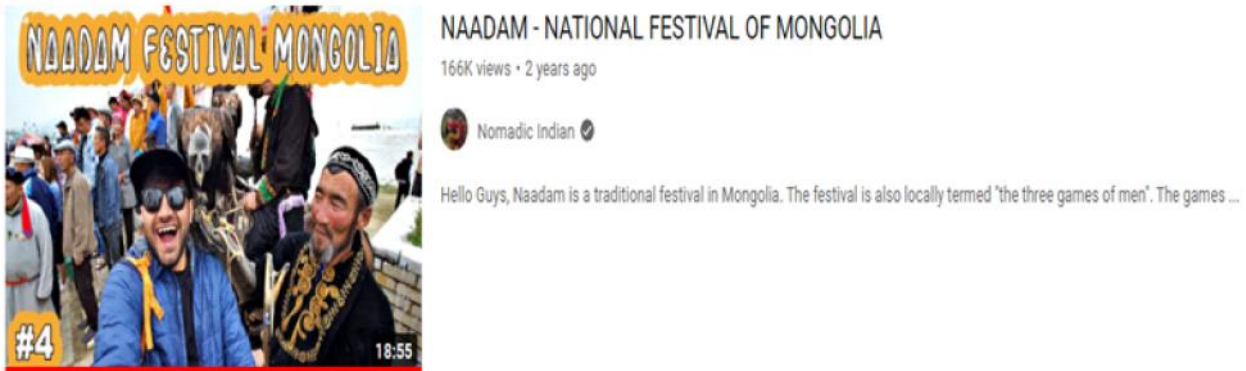


Figure 12: Screenshot from Nomadic Indian YouTube Channel

Mongolia is indeed a historical nation whom we have read in history. But this vlog very nicely showcases about the people and their cultural heritages. In this vlog, especially the vlogger covers the Nadaam festival which is a traditional as well as national festival of the country of Mongolia. The video shows the different games played in the festival and nicely they have been captured by the vlogger. The three main games Archery, Horse-riding and Wrestling are the main parts of this festival. This festival has also been declared heritage by the UNESCO. The vlogger also shares the details of travelling in this country and the accommodation details especially for budget travelers.

Video 3 (Nomadic Indian in Uzbekistan Series 2021, #Episode Number-5/18): “How Uzbekistan treat Indians? Ultimate experience.”- 12K Likes, 236,056 Views, Date of Upload: July 10 2021.



Figure 13: Screenshot from Nomadic Indian YouTube Channel

The vlogger in this video shares an important part of travelling especially for budget and solo travelers. Hitchhiking is a technique where you get lift on the transport of local people without any cost. Though in India it is practiced very rare, in many countries where population is also less and the transport system is also not developed that much, many traveller’s use the method of hitchhiking. In this vlog the viewers can see the country of Uzbekistan, where the vlogger travels in different parts of the Jizjaq province of Uzbekistan. But what matters the most is the method of hitchhiking which he uses throughout his travel in this video and also he shares the experiences through this vlog.

Video 4 (Georgia Series 2021, #Episode Number-7/14): “Hitchhiking to Last Village on Russian border.”- 15K Likes, 229,849 Views, Date of Upload: September 28 2021.



Figure 14: Screenshot from Nomadic Indian YouTube Channel

In this video blog the vlogger explains the process how to travel in the beautiful country of Georgia which shares its border with Russia. The people of Georgia are indeed very much hospitable and the local culture of the place also gets reflected through this video. The vlogger stays in a hostel where he introduces the local hosts who are also very much interested about Indian Bollywood and actors. He then travels hitchhiking to Kari village which is the last village in the border of Russia. The vlog shares the beautiful cinematic beauty of the mountains, the river and snowfall of Georgia.

Video 5 (Nomadic Indian in Iran Series 2018, #Episode Number- 4/21): “How Iranians treat Indians?”- 19K Likes, 859,852 Views, July 2 2018.



Figure 15: Screenshot from Nomadic Indian YouTube Channel

This is the last vlog for this channel which is analyzed in this study. Like the other vlogs too here in this video the vlogger travels in the mid of the great nation of Iran from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz through the process of hitchhiking. First of all, through the beautiful cinematography the beautiful long roads of Iran, the arid regions of Iran get covered in this video. Also, as he travels by hitchhiking, the nature and helping hospitality of the local people are very much known from these kind of vlogs. Overall these kind of vlogs indeed helps the viewers to get inspired and travel throughout the world in different budget trips as well. Vlogs are indeed a new way which is indeed been a success story.

Significance of the Study

This research study is indeed very important for today’s society. As we have seen over the years media has always evolved from one form to another day after day, year after year. From Johannes Gunttenberg’s Printing press to modern smartphone and internet connection, the New Media and digital technology media is upgrading itself day by day. Mass media in today’s society has indeed turned the globe into a global village where we all are connected somewhere or the other. Likewise, the new updated version of blogging, which is video blogging or also known as vlogging has an immense important role to play in the society. This research study is important as the researcher here analyzed

the different vlogs from three Indian travel vloggers. Through this content we can see that these vloggers are travelling and exploring through different parts of the world, and through their video vlogs they are presenting their experiences as well as information regarding those places. This is indeed revolutionary where the audiences and viewers sitting at their homes are able to see different places and cultures on their smartphones. In the future also, vlogging will emerge as one of the most personalized way of sharing different forms of art, craft, drama, travel, personal experiences, and most importantly as it does not include any gatekeeper, the raw material directly reaches the audience, in their original form. So, the most important significance of this research study is that it brings to the forefront of researchers and media scholars the very fact that Vlogging and similar new modes of mass media transmission is the future of media evolution and as researchers and scholars' important research must be focused on this issue. This will not only help the academia but also help the society at large.

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