



Increasing interest and engagement in safety and security organisations' YouTube content

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This research explores the methods government public safety and security organisations' can use to enhance the engagement of their YouTube audiences and boost their view counts, by utilising insights and best practises used by commercial entities. The relationship between societies' strategic communications and their agencies' social media content, namely YouTube videos, is also studied, as well as related security and public safety challenges faced by societies. A relevant conclusion is drawn from findings based on literature and references presented in the study. The research question is: How can the viewer engagement of public safety and security organisations' YouTube channels be improved by incorporating methods used by commercial entities to influence consumer engagement? As an accessible and global medium YouTube is being used by several regional, national and international public safety and security organisations to reach citizens. The messages conveyed by government YouTube videos, as well as their other social media content, ultimately become part of the body of their strategic communications. In comparison, all commercially generated, published content become part of the firm's brand in a very similar manner. Democratic societies are being targeted by destabilising and malicious messages from both outside and within, often conveyed through social media. While these messages can never be fully blocked, it is important to have government presence in social media, as it enhances resilience and citizen engagement. The research concludes that understanding the medium, or platform, including its users, culture and the contextual environment is paramount for successful YouTube operations.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

This research will explore and identify the elements that are determinative for improving viewer engagement of governmental public safety and security organisations' YouTube channels and audio-visual products on YouTube. The research will analyse literature pertaining to existing common denominators of successful strategies for achieving and maintaining viewer engagement on YouTube and other social media. It will introduce the methods used by commercial entities applicable to governmental safety and security organisations.

Public safety and security organisations utilise YouTube, as well as other social media platforms to reach citizens concerning a broad spectrum of issues. The messages can be security related: they can inform the public to withstand fake news, health frauds or emergencies. They can be used to convey nationally and socially significant information or they can be part of the organisation's community outreach. In short, the messages are used to strengthen the societies' resilience and citizen engagement. While the target audience generally is some segment of the domestic or local population, the platform is global. Therefore, the audience is also, at least potentially, global.

Although there is an abundance of research on the strategies of brand influence and consumer engagement in internet video context, there is a scarcity of data regarding the role of internet videos in the context of governmental or public safety and security organisations. Such organisations include emergency rescue and medical services, police and other law enforcement organisations, the armed forces, cyber security agencies and other agencies acting in the field of societies comprehensive security.

YouTube's distinct fabric of professional-generated content (PGC), user-generated content (UGC) supports a unique commercial ecosystem. This ecosystem opens several potential ways for organisations and brands, as well as government authorities to better reach their audiences by utilising means of brand journalism, influencer marketing and content marketing; to speak directly to audiences. YouTube's ecosystem can be utilised effectively to disseminate attractive, attention catching content to media consumers. This

capacity for broadcasting, and more importantly, narrowcasting, combined with the refined role of many organisations' public relations departments as media producers and story tellers creates unique opportunities in driving engagement.

In this research the organisations and agencies are studied in the context of democratic societies. This slightly ambiguous classification does not have clearly defined specifications and several freedom indices are used globally. For the sake of clarity, this research uses the definition of democracy used in the Democracy Index, produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2018). Countries both in 'full democracy' and 'flawed democracy' categories are included (Figure 1). The countries included are roughly the same that are generally found in similar categories also in several other freedom indices, such as Freedom in the World and Press Freedom Index.

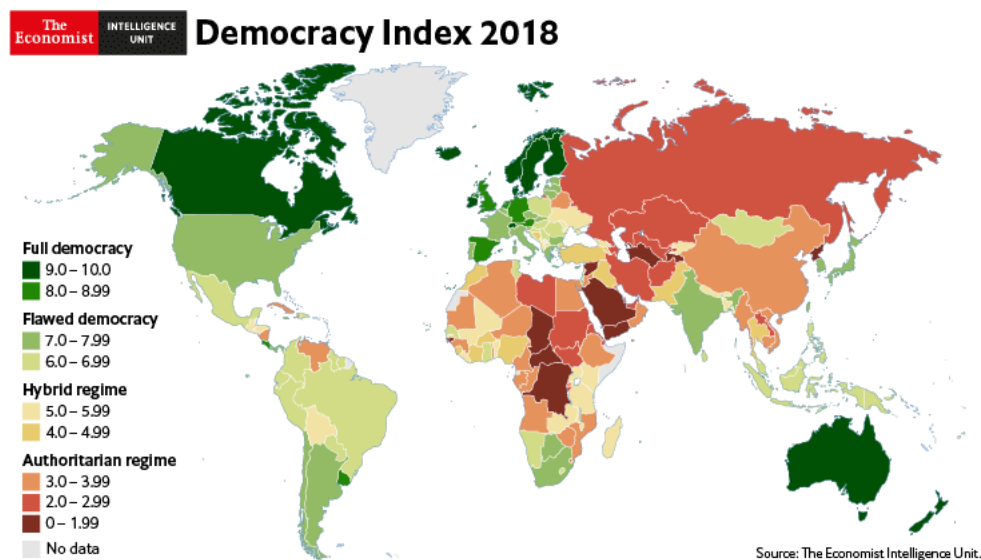


Figure 1. World Map, Democracy Index 2018 (The Economist Intelligence Unit)

Democratic countries have been chosen for the study because generally speaking, the same rules apply to all of them. In democratic, open societies governments are accountable for their citizens and government produced social media content serves a dual role; it is part of the government organisations' public service communications and on the other hand, part of their respective societies' strategic communications, deliberately or not.

YouTube, as the top video-sharing website and second most-popular website in the world (Alexa 2019), has been chosen for the subject of this research. As the global video platform, YouTube's constantly evolving media and business models together with its vast amount of user-generated and professionally-generated content form a part of the information sphere that the governments cannot afford not to be involved with.

This topic is relevant for the content creators in the operational level, or the 'field', as well as for tactical level directors and producers. The research also has implications for strategic communication planners, who can use its findings to better balance the resources allocated to necessary actions. In general, this research seeks to improve viewer engagement of online audio-visual material.

In existing literature, the term 'engagement' is defined and discussed inconsistently. Some practitioners and scholars understand the term as being individual's interaction with media, such as users' click-based interactions and simply the act of viewing the content, while others have viewed engagement as a concept that combines behavioural actions, cognitive processes and emotions to produce a dialog between public and brands (Khan 2016; Brubaker & Wilson 2018). While it is important to understand the implications of user interaction in YouTube, such as the rationale behind actions such as likes, dislikes, comments and shares, this research views engagement with an organization-public relationship approach. In practice as the interaction between the public and the brands, or in this case, the government organisations, that encompasses the audiences' perceptions and may enhance the relationships between citizens and organisations (Brubaker & Wilson 2018). However, it is somewhat hard to distinct the different views from each other, and to determine if the behavioural actions indicate the enhancement of organisation-public relationship. In some cases, the opposing views distinctly intersect.

This research begins with an elaboration of the concept of strategic communications. It then introduces challenges faced by public safety and security organisations, as well as whole societies, identified by related research. Subsequently, the attributes of YouTube as a medium and its commercial practises are discussed based on existing research as well as insights and best practices of marketing, advertising and public relations. Finally,

presented literature, along with references will be synthesized, and a relevant conclusion will be drawn from those findings.

The research question is: How can the viewer engagement of public safety and security organisations' YouTube channels be improved by incorporating methods used by commercial entities to influence consumer engagement?

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Governments and strategic communications

In the military context, it has been understood since a long time ago, that all actions in the physical world also have an impact in the information dimension. The use of kinetic force in battlespace always sends ripples to information sphere, be it the Greeks' use of war elephants against Romans during the battle of Heraclea in 280 BC, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 or the Israeli use of force against (at least seemingly) unarmed Palestinian civilians during the first Intifada in the 1980's. All decisions and actions by governments cause the opinions, attitudes and ultimately the actions of citizens, authorities, businesses and the whole global community to change, not only by direct action, but also through the message the action conveys. This of course in turn, forces governments to react to the changed conditions. This never-ending circle of actions and consequences is represented in cultural philosopher Marshal McLuhan's phrase (1964) 'the medium is the message'.

Therefore, communications are essential for national and government strategies, although Cornish et al. (2011) report that more often than not, at the practical level the dynamics of actions and communications are not clear to government organisations. According to a 2011 Chatham House report, although the need to communicate more strategically has been recognized by governments, they have not been particularly fast to deploy the several decades worth of central insights and best practices of marketing, advertising and public relations in their own operations (Cornish et al. 2011). Although the concept of strategic communications has been studied in the 'west', or North-America and Europe, for years, its role and use has not been thoroughly confronted. The practice of strategic

communications in the field has also been disorganized and essentially reactive, as evidenced by the analyses of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (2016) and Cornish et al. (2011).

Regarding security and public safety perspectives, strategic communications and other 'soft' power elements offer tools to uphold stable and inclusive conditions in societies and reduce conflict (Cornish et al. 2011). In some aspects the 'West' is 'out-communicated' by outside forces, or 'enemies' and a wide range of 'alternative' voices and opinions that are sometimes hostile to the western objectives or seek to destabilize societies (Cornish et al. 2011; European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016).

As the need to communicate strategically has been recognized in the governments, so has the need to develop more comprehensive concepts and definitions for strategic communications (Cornish et al. 2011). One insightful definition is provided by the prominent 19th century Prussian military theorist and General Carl von Clausewitz - although the term 'strategic communications' was not a part of his vocabulary - when he wrote about the 'spirit and moral qualities' that influence decision making and inspire 'armies, governments and public opinion' (von Clausewitz 1832). For the sake of clarity, this research uses a simple yet inclusive definition of strategic communications by Steve Tatham as a basis (cited in Cornish et al. 2011):

'A systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across strategic, operational and tactical levels, that enables understanding of target audiences and, identifies effective conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behaviour.'

2.2 Open governance and social media

According to Central Government Communications Guidelines published by the Prime Minister's Office of Finland (2016), it is essential that communications professionals have access to core matters related to preparations and decision making of government organisations. The guidelines stress the importance of open public communications and recognizes the importance of efficient cooperation between authorities as well as being aware of the citizens expectations. Digitalisation and social media have also made citizens themselves more important as communicators and individual media producers (Prime Minister's Office 2016).

The above-mentioned guidelines are also reflected in a study conducted by Mergel (2012: p. 286), where she presents useful core principles of government agencies communication paradigm:

'To inform the general public, generate and maintain their support, to provide information and services to specialized publics, such as professional groups, in the policy community, to gain attention and participation of the groups in their constituency, and to gain insights from readers.'

According to research by Mergel (2012), the traditional top-down model of government hierarchies is challenged by the extremely fast technological innovation and development. Around the world, governments seek to increase openness and to inform citizens better, although most e-government processes are not yet working as platforms of true interaction and engagement but are rather stuck at stages where they provide only a basic level of two-way interaction or are used merely for information broadcasting purposes (Mergel 2012; 2015).

Social media, on the other hand, holds the potential to enable citizens fully in supposed open governance practices that e-government processes have not yet fulfilled, although Mergel (2015) notes that most social media tactics in government use are focused on pushing, or broadcasting information to the public or recycling content already published in the organisations' webpages, rather than engaging more fully with the audiences.

Furthermore, the relationship between citizens' trust and satisfaction in government and the use of e-government solutions might be somewhat complex. The effects of e-government and the use of web technologies on the level of trust in government is under debate in the existing literature (Brainard 2016; Porumbescu 2016). Findings on a study on citizens' trust and satisfaction in government by Porumbescu (2016) indicates that the use of e-government applications might actually affect trust in government negatively. Exposure to communication platforms that contain considerable amounts of detailed information is less effective in boosting the levels of trust when compared to platforms providing more general information, such as social media services. Less detailed information is linked to more positive evaluations of the public sector, whereas more information rich messages may work better when actual critical input from the public is required (Porombescu 2016).

On a general level Mergel notes (2012; 2015), that government social media managers need to understand who their followers are, what do the followers expect from government and how to fulfil those expectations. They need to identify the emerging issues that need to be considered, and know how to use social media as a stable and lasting governance mechanism that increases public transparency and accountability, rather than treat it as a short-term campaign tool (Mergel 2015; Guillamón et al. 2016). Understanding the followers and engaging with them will help to identify the right metrics for developing the quality of content and comments (Mergel 2012) and will eventually help to further develop social media strategies and tactics. In relation to this, it is important to understand the followers from the point of view of security, as social media platforms can be utilized as tools for enhancing emergency organisations' situational awareness (Pogrebnyakova & Maldonado 2018).

A government organisation's social media strategies need to be in alignment with the organisation's mission. By conducting a needs assessment the organisation's objectives regarding audiences and the use of social media can be outlined and the misuse of the tools provided can be prevented by identifying new organisational roles (Mergel 2015; Guillamón et al. 2016). Like businesses and brands, government organisations also need to define their target audience in order to engage with the right stakeholders. It is equally important to find the right kind of medium to convey the right kind of messages in the context of strategic communications (Cornish 2011; European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016) as it is with local government departments.

Online tactics, as defined by Mergel (2015), can be divided to four categories: (1) pushing information out to citizens, in a broadcast like manner, (2) actively pulling information from citizens by asking them to post content and comments and thus provide their insights, (3) providing customer service to individual users, and (4) networking and collaborating with citizens and interest groups to improve governance. Mergel observes, that social media services have already implemented all four stages while e-government processes generally operate only on levels 1 and 2.

The forced collaboration with a third-party technology provider is a great challenge for adapting government organisations to use social media platforms (Mergel 2015). Third-

party platforms should not be used as the only available service. Government organisations need to provide comparable information and services through official government websites, and also pay close attention to citizens' individual privacy issues when third-party services are used (White House 2010; Prime Minister's Office 2016). There is, however, also merit to the collaboration between governments and social media providers. Finnish Prime Minister's Office (2016) publication 'Central Government Communications Guidelines' notes that social media services are well suited for different customer service applications and crisis communications. On a general level, social media platforms can be more resilient than governments own platforms during a time of crisis; for example, denial of service attacks may cripple government webpages but are more unlikely to affect social media platforms with dispersed, global architecture.

Mergel (2015) also observes the importance of online measurement techniques that help organisations in assessing the effects of the efforts; are the messages sent on the right medium and are they reaching the right audiences? Information regarding the success of actions can in turn be used to adjust the online tactics.

2.3 Societies as targets

2.3.1 Destabilizing narratives from outside...

During the latter half of the 2010s the EU has been increasingly hit by destabilising messages from Russian use of 'soft power' and deceptive media campaigns to the brutal and aggressive messages of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016). According to the Institutes analysis (2016), any controversial issues and divides between the EU member states or within societies may be extracted and amplified by coherent Russian information campaigns. Existing cognitive biases of different demographics are confirmed and exaggerated, which helps to fragment the information sphere and create disunity in target societies (Bentzen 2018). Vast amounts of false information in various languages is distributed in social media and fake news media by propaganda writers and bots, twisting public debate; in essence information operations against citizens are constantly in progress (Aro 2016).

Examples of these campaigns include the so-called Macron e-mail leak during the 2017 French presidential elections, during which leaked e-mails were spread by Russian state-owned media such as Sputnik and RT as well as several bot accounts in social media platforms (Bentzen 2018). Still, according to the analysis of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (2016), Russian use of soft power has not been particularly successful; vast majorities in the EU member states are not buying the narrative pushed by Russia's 'soft power' offensive, although it has been able to exploit the European Union's growing internal dissatisfaction.

ISIL on its part has redefined the methods of conveying political messages during conflict, both in brutality and in ingenious ways of communication. The organisations messages are tailored to several audiences, both 'Western' and 'local'; they are intended to radicalize individuals and polarize societies (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016). The Institutes analysis determines the Western approach to ISIL's messages to be dual purposed: in the strategic perspective Western messages aim to discredit ISIL's grand narrative, its own reason for existence. On the tactical level their purpose is to counter the radicalising messages of ISIL. Both the EU and its individual member states have strategic communications campaigns against ISIL, in Middle East, North Africa and Europe (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016).

2.3.2 ...and within

Different conspiracy-theories have emerged or have been re-established among the rise of the social media. They are being promoted by 'news outlets' of state actors or emerging-state actors such as Russia or ISIS (Aro 2016; European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016) as well as private individuals and groups. For example, 'conspiracy-theoretical' messages have been used during Ukraine's Orange and Euromaidan revolutions to destabilize the European Union, or 'Western' societies and their partners (Aro 2016; Bentzen 2018).

One of the most persistent modern conspiracy-theories is the notion that public health measures, such as vaccinations are harmful or that pathogens, like H1N1 virus, are 'man made' (Madathil et al. 2015). Healthcare related videos are a prominent sub-genre in

YouTube, and these videos may contain information that contradicts societies' public health recommendations. Research conducted by Madathil et al. (2015) showed that majority of videos addressing vaccinations displayed them negatively. The research raised concerns over ordinary citizen's high probability for encountering videos that are not scientifically accurate and the possibly significant effects this might have on health campaigns.

Decrease in immunization coverage might lead to a large-scale public safety hazard. For example, several unvaccinated children were reported to have contracted measles in Finland during November and December 2018. The disinformation about the dangers related to vaccinations had been spread on social media (Yle 2018).

It is reported in the United States, that measles outbreaks have sprung up at least in nine states during the winter of 2018 and 2019. Washington Post reports that public pressure from anti-vaccination activists has caused state lawmakers to change vaccination requirements to allow virtually anyone to opt out of vaccination programs (Sun & O'Hagan 2019).

In response to growing global reluctance to accept immunisation, World Health Organisation's (WHO) Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation (SAGE) has established a SAGE Working Group on Vaccine Hesitancy in 2012. One of the Working Groups tasks was to identify strategies that could have positive impact on vaccine uptake, including the use of social media and private sector marketing strategies (WHO 2014).

The societies' existing internal divisions, as well as disagreements among the international community are being used to spread discord. After the United States 2016 and French 2017 presidential elections, it seems that social media in particular has become a platform for systematic actions designed to influence public opinion and behaviour to move away from established, stable standards. Different conspiracy theories are being fed by actors inside the Western societies as well as outside forces (Aro 2016; Bentzen 2018). The internal divisions, distinctive for contemporary Western societies, as well as deficient policy delivery and the rise of populism have contributed to a process

creating an environment that is receptive to destabilising actions (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016).

Destabilising and malicious information can never be fully blocked, but in light of MacLuhan's (1964) thoughts about media as extensions of our senses, or ourselves, it is important to contribute to the exchange of actions and messages. Government presence in YouTube, just as the use of any other medium, enables societies to shape new forms of collaboration and engagement, thus enhancing society's resilience.

3 YOUTUBE AS A MEDIUM

3.1 Setting trends...

There is a significant amount of academic interest in YouTube. At the time of writing ScienceDirect.com shows a result of almost 12,000 articles of peer-reviewed scholarly literature including the word 'YouTube' in their title. During the last decade, several articles have been published about the dynamics of video popularity, content and audience engagement.

YouTube is a convergence medium. It influences and challenges television, of which alternative it started in 2005, by bridging broadcasting and the internet, but has subsequently itself become part of the media industry (Kim 2012; Morreale 2014). With its strong communal set of everyday values, YouTube, in its part provides a piece of local, oral culture, where technology has enabled people to experience fellowship, not dissimilar to oral tradition. It has become the trendsetter on internet video; it is in fact the de facto video site in the Internet. Its pattern of easily accessible, short and mostly humorous videos has become the standard also on many corporate media websites. At the same time, it has become more compatible with the traditional media's interests. The seamless flow of content and commercials and attention to copyrights imitates the operations of traditional media (Kim 2012). It has been argued that YouTube is in fact reinforcing the power structure of traditional media, rather than being part of an attempt to break free from the traditional top-down model (Morreale 2014).

According to Cunningham & Craig (2017) there are essentially three native-to-online content types that are economically feasible to produce and at the same time successfully attract viewers in an on-line environment: vlogging, gameplay and style tutorials. Of course, in the real-world things are not that bleak; although YouTube is not known as a platform for successful narrative based projects, the sheer volume of variable content proves that success often comes in surprising forms. Nevertheless, the popularity of the three above-mentioned genres highlights the fact that authenticity and realism are prevalent attributes in YouTube's most viewed videos (Ferchaud et al. 2017). Both entertainment and information seeking are statistically important factors in predicting people's YouTube consumption (Khan 2016). Understanding the factors that affect user engagement metrics and popularity can prove to be useful when developing tools to study user engagement and preferences (Park et al. 2016).

3.2 ...and going viral

The term 'viral video' describes highly popular videos that spread in the digital sphere via electronic word-of-mouth. Evident in the videos considered to have viral attributes is YouTube's renowned focus on ordinary people; although a number of professionally created videos do 'go viral', most of them feature ordinary people and are distinctively user (or amateur) created (Burgess 2008; Broxton 2011; Shifman 2011). A certain portion of the users participate actively in content creation in this modern participatory social media culture. Memetic videos are a manifestation of this culture. They are often somewhat flawed, or 'bad' products that pay little attention to form or aesthetics and typically stem from user-generated content (UGC). They clearly stand out from polished corporate, or professionally-generated content (PGC). In addition to focus on ordinary people in most of the memetic videos, other common features include flawed masculinity, humour, simplicity, repetitiveness and whimsical content (Shifman 2011).

Burgess (2008) argues, that it is important to look at the viral video phenomenon from other angles than corporate media or marketing perspectives: 'Viewed from the perspective of cultural participation rather than marketing, videos are not 'messages', and neither are they 'products' that are distributed via social networks.' Viral videos and memes can be seen as mediators of ideas as opposed to unconnected bits of content that

are produced by authors and then consumed by the public. The ideas they convey are reproduced in social networks and used in new ways and in new works, transforming to something new on each iteration (Burgess 2008).

This constant and incalculable spreading of freely evolving ideas can therefore be seen as an antithesis for nations' strategic communications. Viral videos and memes, very much like government organisations' strategic communications measures, form a fabric of messages influencing and amplifying each other. As the content, such as YouTube videos produced by government organisations is viewed by the public, they are inevitably interpreted as being some part of a larger, society wide fabric of messages and meanings, regardless if this was the original plan or not. Freely developing virality is inherently surprising and chaotic, whereas content deemed to convey strategic messages is meticulously planned and constantly attended to. The nature of the virality phenomenon itself makes forecasting a video's virality challenging. YouTube's native system variables or the actual content are not solely responsible for the phenomenon, as external links, domains and social networks also play a crucial role in the spreading process (Khan & Vong 2014).

Khan and Vong (2014) also conclude that virality can take either positive or negative forms; videos may go viral because they are liked and appreciated but they may as well do so because they are disliked. If government organisations plan to use viral marketing strategies, they should also make sure that there are processes implemented to counter the effects of possibly negative virality. Similarly, preparedness for unforeseen publicity is, or at least should be, a standard procedure for government organisations' conducting strategic communications activities.

3.3 Industry practices and amateur aesthetics

YouTube's participatory media culture, with a prominent cross-influence between amateur and professional content has created a unique mixture of industry practices and amateur aesthetics that can support an intricate and sophisticated machinery of promotional practices, although the ecosystem has become somewhat institutionalised, mainly to serve corporate purposes (Arthurs et al. 2018).

In the terms of content and quality, the distinction between PGC and UGC is somewhat hard to define; with YouTube's (and incidentally, the much of the whole Internet's) all-inclusive culture of participation, the line between audience (or consumers) and content creators has blurred to a point where both are equally important for brands' success (Gardner & Lehnert 2016). This rise of a new breed of 'everyman influencer' can also be seen in the corporate content creators' efforts (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki 2018), who lately have ventured to the territory of 'YouTubers' by trying to produce content that feels intimate, genuine or 'rough'. The audience is now somewhat overwhelmed by content that feels more intimate, trustworthy and authentic than the content traditionally provided by media. The content creators influence over large and definable markets in turn attracts advertisers, which keeps the whole YouTube ecosystem running (Gardner & Lehnert 2016).

Very high number of followers is not always sought after, as seen with the emergence of the micro-influencers. The definition of a social media micro-influencer is subjective but is generally thought to be someone with around 1000 to 50 000, or possibly more followers; they are niche players who tend to drive engagement particularly effectively in their own segment, even though their audiences are smaller than the celebrity-status influencers with more subscribers and followers (Wisenberg Brin 2018). Troot Network's and Annalect Finland's survey (2017) also showed that nearly all of the 15-25 -year olds consume content created by YouTubers, at least at times. Among the Finnish 15-25 -year olds, YouTube videos have a higher daily reach than commercial television.

The efforts put in to practise in marketing and advertising to make the content appear more intimate, rough and authentic (Arthurs et al. 2018), suggests that government safety and security organisations would be wise to take them into consideration, especially when reaching young adults is a priority. While 'acted authenticity' or pure UGC might not be appropriate general approaches for government organisations, blurring the line between PGC and UGC might still be useful when competing for audience's attention. The utilisation of suitable micro-influencers in government YouTube and social media communications, for example, might help to create positive results.

3.3.1 Visual content is the king

One aspect concerning the use of social media to improve consumer engagement is the possibility, that social media might in fact not play a significant role in reaching large audiences. For example, it seems that the individuals who follow brands in social media are likely to be those who already consume more of the brands products and are already more engaged (Viswanathan et al. 2018). The efforts invested to social media channels, be it flashy professionally-generated YouTube videos or tweets sharing links to official publications, might bounce around in echo chambers filled with like-minded individuals and have little visibility among those not already familiar with the matter.

Despite this concern, YouTube has the potential to challenge the echo chamber effect, as its content is overwhelmingly visual. Research indicates that visual information is particularly effective in catching audiences' attention. The impact of visual information, (in this case images or video) addressed by Brubaker and Wilson (2018) in their analysis of brand engagement and relationships is based on the notion that processing textual and visual information activates different cognitive processes. Textual information is processed using systematic processing and requires more cognitive effort and attention to information whereas visual information is likely to be processed heuristically, requiring less cognitive effort (Brubaker & Wilson 2018). As visual content can be consumed quickly and effortlessly, it has better premise for breaking out from the bubble of repetitious ideas forming the echo chamber; the content is evaluated in a 'snap judgement' manner, gathering the attention more easily than textual information and thus leading to improved engagement.

The link between visual content and user engagement indicates for its part that through YouTube, organisations can reach audiences they would not be able to reach through less visual social media platforms or traditional media. Influencer marketing company Collective Bias found out in a survey conducted on consumers in the United States that their in-store purchases were ten times more likely to be driven by non-celebrity influencers than celebrity influencers. The behaviour was most prominent among 18 to 34-year olds (Collective Bias, 2016). A survey conducted by Finnish multi-channel network Troot together with marketing and communications company Annalect Finland

(2017) showed similar results in Finland; content produced by YouTubers reached more people daily than commercial television in the 15-25 years old category, users also identified YouTube community and commercial co-operation videos to be more likely to influence their purchase decisions than television or internet commercials.

YouTube's extremely visual expression provides government organisations with means to reach audiences on a more emotional level. Since the safety and security organisations daily routines tend to be somewhat out of the public sight, their followers might be somewhat specialised, or form a niche audience. Visual content can be an effective way to broaden the organisations audiences.

3.4 Metrics

There are two primary forces that drive the popularity of the YouTube videos: its content (such as the quality and appeal perceived by users); and its dissemination mechanisms (Borghol et al. 2012; Figueiredo et al 2014). Users' opinions about the videos' content are subjective and content may in fact not be the most important factor affecting the videos' popularity. While content has a significant impact on a video's popularity it, is argued that there might be latent factors that also have a role in determining its popularity (Figueiredo et al 2014). These 'content-agnostic' factors, such as uploaders established social network, targeted keywords for the video, or the order in which a video is uploaded in relation to similar content have been of considerable interest but difficult to study accurately; for example, an established channel with a large number of subscribers is likely to get more views for its videos than a new channel with a small number of subscribers, even though the actual content of the videos would be exactly the same (Borghol et al. 2012).

YouTube's basic video statistics are produced from the video's likes, dislikes and views. YouTube also collects more detailed statistics (which are available only to the channel operator) such as audience retention, watch time, traffic sources and viewer demographics. However, it should be observed that the view times metric, while being a subject of much attention, should be considered with caution, since Google has never publicly announced what its algorithms exactly count as a 'view' (Liikkanen 2013). In

order to better measure the engagement and interaction, YouTube has started to use 'watch time' as a more important metric for video's popularity than simple 'view' (Google 2012). According to Google (2016) 'watch time' metric allows for a better understanding of user behaviour. It illustrates reliably what videos and content users are really watching, not just the number of times a video page is reloaded. Google also notes that channel subscribers in general are more engaged than non-subscribers; instead of just consuming content passively they also tend to comment and share videos and also seek content more actively (Google 2016). It would therefore be in the best interest of the channel operators to commit their viewers more and get them to subscribe to their channels.

The study's contribution to YouTube related research will be in the context of government public safety and security videos. While YouTube videos in the context of government public safety and security on different organisations' channels are generally heterogenous, there are some common characteristics between genres and categories, which may prove to be useful when gathering experiences and learning best practises from similar channel operators.

For example, military videos on YouTube and the Internet in general have several common denominators. They often share common themes of masculinity and valour, and include high tech equipment, heavy machinery and heavy metal music. They can be professionally generated, polished public relations spectacles (Mirrlees 2015) and news reels or user generated from materials obtained from professional sources or filmed in the field by regular servicemen.

Some of the content is easily consumed and understood, designed, polished and directed at potential recruits (Mirrlees 2015). On the other hand, a large portion of content is highly specialized and requires awareness of specified technical, law enforcement or military disciplines, history and politics to be completely understood. This type of videos includes, for example, long historical documents or silent archive footage.

4 GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN YOUTUBE

4.1 Public organisations in a commercial space

Advertising and for-profit motive form the basis of YouTube's commercial ecosystem. As the popular culture aspects and the industry practices interact with each other, the platform can increasingly be described as a 'hybrid cultural-commercial space' (Arthurs et al. 2018). Part of YouTube's strategy is to offer its users, the independent content creators, a possibility to share the revenue produced by advertisements on the site. Individual channel operators can become involved with the business side of the platform by becoming members of the YouTube Partner Program; a Partner Program member can get access to additional channel features and monetisation. Members earn money from ads running on videos that are submitted and approved for monetization, or from other features, such as revenue from YouTube Premium subscriptions, if a Premium subscriber is watching the channel's content (Google 2019a). At the time of writing, Google requires an applying channel to have more than 4,000 public watch hours in the last 12 months and at least 1000 subscribers.

Since safety and security organisations' YouTube channels are operated by public government entities, they generally operate under slightly different set of objectives than commercial channels and in general, are not monetised. According to Google (2019a) monetisation status does not affect how a channels video content is displayed in YouTube. Therefore, operating a YouTube channel successfully is fully possible for government safety and security organisations. It is, at least for now, not necessary to operate in the 'commercial side' of YouTube.

The organisations' channels' content may be produced as professional-generated content (PGC) after the fashion of professional broadcast standards or it may be produced, for example, by the members of the organisation and resemble user-generated content (UGC). At least superficially, the entry barriers for YouTube content creation are low or non-existent. A YouTube channel can be established with virtually no expertise, capital, or personnel. At the entry level the sunk costs of the channel are low and mostly fixed in nature. Professional level production equipment or facilities are not necessary.

Of course, in reality the situation is not that simple. Time and resources need to be allocated for the content producing and for the administration of the channel. As YouTube relies on advertising revenues for its profits, its recommendation algorithms prioritize videos that lead the viewer to watch more videos on the platform; essentially to spend more time watching other videos, that in turn will likely attract the viewer to watch even more videos on the service. As discussed earlier, this objective is highlighted by YouTube's emphasis on the term 'watch time' over more traditional 'views' over recent years. This means that the operator's channel benefits from increasing awareness of the viewing habits of its target audience and from taking steps to produce content that best suits those habits (Google 2016).

4.2 A full spectrum of security, safety and emergency content

There is a large spectrum of YouTube channels and content available in the security and safety context, produced by a variety of means. In some cases, governments fund consultancies to enhance their communications (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016), such as YouTube content, with PGC while others publish mainly UGC videos. Some security organisations opt to maintain their own professional media production capabilities, as is the case with the Serbian military film centre Zastava Film, belonging to the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia (Zastava Film 2019) or with combat camera units of the Canadian, Finnish and Swedish armed forces, among others (Canadian Armed Forces 2019; Finnish Defence Forces 2019a; Swedish Armed Forces 2019a).

In the terms of content and quality, the distinction between PGC and UGC in government channels is somewhat hard to define, as is the case with corporate content creators and their efforts to produce more 'intimate' and 'authentic' content. The governmental channels' content in general can be described as being very heterogenous in terms of delivery. For example, and obviously in pursuit of more 'intimate' and 'genuine' content, the Finnish Defence Forces YouTube channel features videos produced in collaboration with a YouTube micro-influencer (figure 2), among the channel's more general, military themed content.



Figure 1. Screen captures from the Finnish Defence Forces YouTube channel featuring YouTuber Jalmafi. Jalmafi completed his conscription service in 2018 and is sharing his insights with the future conscripts in a video series (Finnish Defence Forces 2018).

Another example is the Swedish Armed Forces (2019a) approach, in which it has adapted a two-channel YouTube strategy, with the main channel publishing high-end PGC and an ‘insight’ channel publishing prompt commentaries and interviews from the field.

YouTube offers many options for reaching audiences from outside the publisher’s home country or language area. YouTube’s native closed captioning tool provides the users the ability to create subtitles with several languages. The titles and descriptions of the videos can be made language specific, with prewritten titles in different languages to be shown with the viewers operating systems language. Automatic caption generating is available in several languages, as well as automatic translations based on the said captions. A universal approach for different language versions is to produce same content in several languages or have independent channels for different languages. These methods are being employed for example by the Canadian Armed Forces (2019), operating several PGC YouTube channels for all three service branches (Army, Air Force and Navy), either bilingual or separate English and French channels. The content of the channels varies from old archive films to modern educational videos, with the main Canadian Armed Forces channel being used as the main recruitment platform in YouTube (Mirrlees 2015).

The practice of utilizing multiple channels for organisations sub-departments or branches is somewhat common among large government organisations that have autonomous branches and for example in the case of bilingual Canada, is often justified. This ‘patchwork approach’ can, however, cause difficulties when resources need to be

concentrated to form a coherent narrative for strategic communications purposes on external communications (European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016).

Despite the abundance of different categories and the pervasiveness of serious and business-like content in the government organisations' channels, it seems that the most popular content is entertainment. It is well known that comedy and entertainment are among YouTube's most watched categories (Google 2019b). This is also reflected in the security related content, as observed by Pogrebnyakov and Maldonado (2018) while studying the role of social media in situational awareness of the emergency services, where they determined that the most engaging category of content was the 'hedonic', or entertainment category. Entertaining content has an important role to play in driving engagement, and may even communicate the organisation's core messages, even though it does not necessarily have much value regarding strategic communications or the improvement of situational awareness. More often than not, some of the products with most viewer engagement and watch time come from the entertainment category (Arthurs et al. 2018; Pogrebnyakov & Maldonado 2018). Examples of this category include 'animal videos', such as the New York Police Department's video about the NYPD Mounted Unit's horses (figure 3a) and the 'showreel' videos of the Finnish Defence Forces combat camera unit (figure 3b), which represent the 'military entertainment' genre.



Figure 3. (a) NYPD Mounted Unit's video starring police horse Zeus and the unit's other horses. (b) Finnish Defence Forces combat camera showreel features stylish images edited in a 'militainment' fashion. (a: New York City Police Department 2017 b: Finnish Defence Forces 2019)

Humorous fictional short films are content that one might not expect to find in the security organisations' channels on a regular basis. While these organisations are generally seen

by the public in a rather serious way, it has become somewhat of a Christmas tradition for the Police of Finland to publish videos depicting police officers meeting Father Christmas on the Police's 'family friendly' channel or music videos featuring tenor-voiced officers singing Christmas hymns (Oulu Police Department 2015) or patriotic songs for more mature audiences on different police-operated channels (figure 4a). This tradition has also spread to rescue departments in Finland as depicted by the Itä-Uusimaa Rescue Department's rendition of 'Finlandia' by Jean Sibelius (2018, figure 4b) and judging from the view counts of the videos it has been a sound strategy and has undoubtedly resulted in these organisations to be seen in a more humane and easily approachable light.

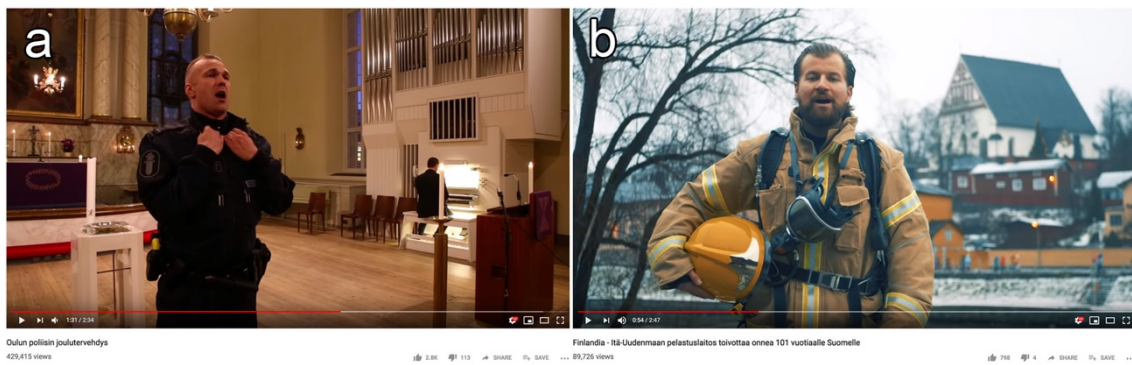


Figure 4. A Finnish police officer (a) and a firefighter (b) singing hymns on their respective departments' YouTube channels (a: Oulu Police Department 2015, b: Itä-Uusimaa Rescue Department 2018).

A large part of the content on the organisations' YouTube channels belong to the public relations day-to-day, business-as-usual category. Some products within this category deal with local and current matters, such as New York Police Department (NYPD) (2019) aviation unit's community outreach video about sponsoring an inner-city high school (figure 5a) while some products highlight the everyday work of organisations' personnel, such as officers participating in neighbourhood policing duties (figure 5b).

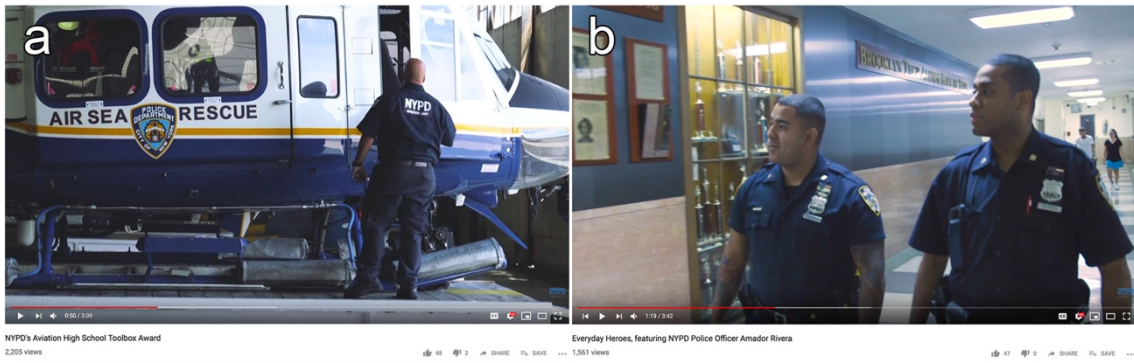


Figure 5. NYPD Aviation Unit personnel preparing for a high school award ceremony (a) and NYPD personnel on neighbourhood policing duties (b), screen captures from the Inside NYPD YouTube channel (New York City Police Department 2019).

Some organisations have identified preparedness information as an emerging issue in their communities and have included these topics in their YouTube strategy. Examples of this content include NYPD’s active shooter, terrorism and crisis prevention videos (New York Police Department 2019), and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency’s (2019) YouTube channel which publishes short films on the prevention and handling of emergencies and crises as well as practical tips for everyday life.

4.3 Strategic content and unforeseen failures

On the other hand, the strategic messages category often includes videos which aim to inform citizens or international audiences about key issues, answering questions such as what the organisations are doing, how are they doing it and why it is important for the audience to know about it. Examples of this approach include the Swedish (figure 6a) and Finnish (figure 6b) Armed Forces content concerning their mutual defence cooperation as well as their cooperation with NATO partners (Finnish Defence Forces 2019; Swedish Armed Forces 2019), which are considered to be matters of significant national importance. Another example of these messages is the Finnish Defence Forces YouTube channel’s multilingual video series exploring Finnish conscription system and society’s comprehensive security approach (2013).



Figure 6. (a) Swedish Armed Forces video from international exercise Aurora 17 with 163 968 views, 3 100 likes and 63 unlikes, published 29 September 2017. (b) Finnish Defence Forces video from international exercise Trident Juncture 2018 with 45 344 views, 693 likes and 15 unlikes, published 30 October 2018. Both screen captures taken on 12 March 2019 (a: Swedish Armed Forces 2017 b: Finnish Defence Forces 2018).

YouTube content dealing with key issues should obviously be carefully planned and meticulously produced and should be released in conjunction with press releases and accompanying social media campaigns. However, every so often these products fail to resonate with the audience, despite the time-consuming planning phase and production value. The content might have been intended to be published in some other medium and thus might not be best suited for YouTube or there might be ‘content-agnostic’ factors at play (Borghol et al. 2012); the video might have been published just after a similar product has had an overwhelming success and has saturated the media’s attention, it might have suffered from an inconveniently dated public relations disaster which has put it in a negative spin in the public discussion and has caught mainly negative attention or its accompanying marketing campaigns might have been conducted poorly.

An example of the negative attention on YouTube is the Finnish Ministry of Justice’s YouTube channel’s multilingual series of short videos in the ‘Against Hate’ anti-hate speech campaign (Ministry of Justice, Finland 2019). The videos have attracted a moderate number of views, although given the fact that they feature a cast of Finnish star actors, there could have been potential for reaching bigger audiences. However, the notable concern is the videos’ likes to unlikes ratio; all of them have more unlikes than likes, some of them tens or even hundreds of times more (figure 7a). There could be several reasons for the high number of unlikes. The actual content could be created and presented in a way that is disliked by the channels subscribers and occasional viewers. However, given the very steep ratio of likes to unlikes and the somewhat divisive nature

of the campaign, it seems plausible that there are ‘content-agnostic’ factors at play. The video might have been shared in a discussion forum or social media platform with negative discussion about the topic, leading to an influx of dissatisfied viewers. With the video’s comments disabled it is hard to gather information about the reasons for the dislikes.

Another example of the ‘failed resonance’ can be found in the Serbian Armed Forces YouTube channel (2018); a Zastava Film produced promotional video about voluntary military service has gathered only just over 300 views, despite the good quality of the final product and its prominent production value, including professional cinematography and actors (figure 7b). Both videos provide an example of a product that does not have noticeable flaws in terms of production value and quality but have somehow created attention (or lack thereof) that very likely was not the original intention.



Figure 7. (a) Finnish Ministry of Justice’s anti-hate speech campaign video with 25 595 views, 54 likes and 2 400 dislikes, published on 3 Feb 2019. (b) Serbian Armed Forces promotional video 336 views, 11 likes and 1 unlike, published on 14 sep 2018. Both screen captures taken on 9 Mar 2019 (a: Finnish Ministry of Justice 2019, b: Serbian Armed Forces 2018).

An interesting opportunity to gain insights about the effects of ‘content-agnostic’ factors is provided by the Swedish Armed Forces and Finnish Defence Forces YouTube channels, which after the Swedish Army’s international combined exercise in March 2019 published the same video on their respective channels (figure 8). The topic of the videos is the cooperation between the Swedish and Finnish Armies during the exercise. They feature the exact same images, sounds and editing as well as text graphics in their native languages. The videos were published at the same time after the exercise. The number of

views and reactions are on the similar scale, the Swedish video with more likes and the Finnish video with more views, an indication of somewhat similar core audiences.



Figure 8. (a) Swedish Armed Forces video ‘Starkare tillsammans’ (Stronger together) with 22 773 views, 948 likes and 12 dislikes. (b) Finnish Defence Forces video ‘Yhdessä vahvempia’, (Stronger together) with 26 277views, 569 likes and 10 dislikes. Both screen captures taken on 3 Apr 2019 (a: Swedish Armed Forces 2019, b: Finnish Defence Forces 2019).

5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

YouTube’s pervasiveness and impact on societies necessitates the authorities to employ a range of measures and sustained rethinking of communications and public relations strategies. It is a medium that has gained momentum in a scale that cannot be ignored. Medium shapes the messages, or in the words of Marshal McLuhan (1964), medium is the message; the medium itself is a key influencer in how the content is understood by the people and it shapes their behaviour as much as the content.

New technologies always create new patterns in consuming media. A concrete example of this mechanism is presented in a study on the effect of the spreading of the printing press to emergence of great scientists and artists by Jara-Figueroa et al. (2019); new communication technologies cause the content to change in a direction best suited for the technology. As technologies are introduced, they cause new kinds of stories to be told and new kind of ‘heroes’ or significant historical figures to emerge; for example, while the invention of printing created a boost in the emergence of scientists and artists, the emergence of film, radio and television on their own part created such new classes of renowned people as singers, actors and soccer players (Jara-Figueroa et al. 2019).

YouTube's intrinsic features, such as its culture of participation, abundance of user-generated content and its whole existence as a hybrid commercial space, accelerate the process of 'entrepreneurialisation of the self', which in turn has given rise to such occupations as vloggers, social media influencers and 'micro-celebrities' (Arthurs et al 2018). Different niche groups have their own sets of famous and influential figures, or 'heroes'.

One example of these figures in the context of government security and safety organisations is a Finnish YouTuber Jalmafi (with 16 165 subscribers on 9 March 2019), who produced a series of inspirational videos during his conscription service and has later been featured in the Finnish Defence Forces YouTube channel (Karvinen 2019). Of course, in the participatory world of YouTube, the equilibrium seems to balance itself, as demonstrated by anti-war and pacifist groups, who are challenging the videos that frame the role of militaries in societies as a positive, clean and benevolent in nature, by sharing their own, oppositely framed videos (Mirrlees 2015). These, in turn, share a great deal of attributes with each other and form a genre of their own.

This research has explored the practices, methods and strategies employed in YouTube marketing and advertising to form an overview of the tools available for government security and safety organisations actions regarding YouTube. Next in this chapter, the key findings will be presented.

5.1 Finding 1: Feeling of authenticity is paramount

Successful native-to-YouTube content incorporates strong elements of authenticity and community; 'being real' sets the content apart from the presumably inauthentic content of previously established forms of communication (Cunningham & Craig 2017). A sense of intimacy and interconnectedness is intertwined with different levels of brand relationships through YouTube content (the 'brands' being people, organisations or commercial brands). This feeling of belonging to a community and the ability to share 'private' moments has created a successful relationship between YouTube's UGC ecosystem and advertiser friendly business models. From audience's perspective there are little negative factors in commercial co-operation between YouTubers and businesses.

According to a research by a Finnish multi-channel network Troot and analytics company Annalect Finland (2017), 93 percent of the respondents were aware of the extensive co-operation between popular YouTube channels and businesses, while 84 percent held positive or neutral views on the collaboration.

From commercial perspective, social media platforms are used not only for single promotional sales campaigns or cross-media campaigns aimed at boosting sales but may also be used to engage with customers more deeply over time. Influencing customer behaviour by social media engagement may take time but could also become more effective as the number of followers increase. In a study focusing on promotional and non-promotional firm-generated content Kumar et al. (2016) argue that interaction between brands and customers in social media can strengthen the bond between customers and brands, and that the interaction with other fans and customers can reinforce positive brand attitudes, thus affecting customer behaviour favourably. From a managerial point of view, it is a good objective to maximize the predicted popularity and sentiment evoking elements of the message while planning firm-generated content for a business, thus there is a strong case for businesses to grow the number of their followers, or 'fan base' in social media platforms. The feeling of authenticity is paramount in generating positive sentiment. The content's popularity and its ability to evoke sentiment are strong predicates for its effect on customer behaviour (Kumar et al. 2016).

5.2 Finding 2: Hearts, minds and voices

The approach proposed by Kumar et al. (2016) - producing content that is anticipated to become popular and sentiment evoking - is somewhat similar to the often called upon notion for competition over 'hearts and minds' of the citizens (Cornish et al. 2011) in the context of strategic communications. It is imperative to gather subscribers, fans and sporadic audiences in order to make your own voice to be heard. World Health Organization's SAGE group's report on reducing vaccine hesitancy recognised an important addition to this concept; as well as winning over the hearts and minds of the public it is now more important than ever to also win their voices (WHO 2014). In the age of social media, the citizens almost literally have loudspeakers at their disposal; a large portion of the media consumed by the public is also produced by the public, and

from governmental point of view it makes sense to have as much positive user-generated content published as possible to amplify the favourable messages and behaviours, such as positive attitudes toward immunisation.

The WHO report (2014) is compiled in cooperation with the International Food and Beverage Alliance and it introduces suitable industry marketing practices to be used by WHO to counter pseudoscientific anti-vaccination narratives. The report has identified an important message; the emphasis on story. After all, the stories of the government organisations and their need to achieve strategic goals are not different from those of the commercial brands.

5.3 Finding 3: The level of audience engagement and audience behaviour needs to be monitored

It is challenging to measure the effectiveness of long-term media operations. The verification of the impact chain of the performed measures is ultimately based on estimates as there are often no concrete, physical products to assess and the variables involved in the process are diverse.

Kumar et al. (2016) observe that an important part of achieving favourable results in customer behaviour is the constant monitoring of the level of customer engagement. In the case of YouTube, its analytics and application programming interface (API) provides an excellent set of tools for monitoring and managing customer engagement. This makes another strong argument for including YouTube as one of the social media platforms used to reach customers, or in the case of government organisations, citizens. YouTube's built-in analytics tools help media managers to monitor the performance of organisation's video products in real time, make course corrections to long term plans accordingly and if necessary, react by modifying the means of engagement with the audiences. If, for example, certain types of content repeatedly result in declining subscriber counts, this can be addressed accordingly.

Audience behaviour is always somewhat unpredictable. Competition for the audience in the modern, fast-paced media environment is fierce, which is of course to be expected.

Several factors contribute to the product's reception. Different aspects of the content itself, such as cinematography, subject, editing, performers, musical score and narrative affect the products audience share and reception. External aspects, or 'content-agnostic' factors, such as release time, current themes in the public sphere, state of the publisher's social networks and ongoing social media campaigns also play a crucial part. The effects of 'content-agnostic' factors are harder to estimate than effects of the content as there are more difficult to identify variables.

To make things more complicated, a product may perform differently on different publishing channels. For example, a TV program segment aimed to resonate with audiences not familiar with the organisation in question might work very well in a traditional broadcast environment, but fail spectacularly with a specialized, well-informed and homogenous YouTube niche audience.

From the perspective of media management, it is imperative to understand the factors responsible for high viewer engagement. By understanding these factors, it is possible to modify a YouTube channels 'content-related' and 'content-agnostic' features towards higher view rates and thus better communicate the desired message to the public.

The results are relevant especially to creative personnel, who will receive practical tools for developing high engagement rate products in content creation processes.

5.4 Finding 4: Fragmenting media sphere emphasises expertise and coordination

Although television still remains the most popular media globally, its trending decline and the fast growth of mobile internet consumption (Zenith 2016), together with large numbers of cable, satellite and terrestrial broadcast channels and online video on demand platforms are inevitably going to propel the fragmentation of the media sphere even further. The days when the whole society could be reached with one main evening news broadcast are over. This makes strategic communication more important than ever; societies have to be able to communicate their most important messages, values and goals to different audiences in several platforms, in a coherent manner. Publicists and content creators need to be able to both broadcast and narrowcast their messages out. Multi-

platform approach and comprehensive professional capabilities of public affairs and communications personnel have become essential. It is not enough anymore to present a fact sheet in a press conference and wait for the evening news. If only traditional media approaches are utilized in government communications, a proportion of the citizens are inevitably not going to be reached.

Changed internet consumption habits mean that the audiences are also consuming media differently. This, combined to the evolved nature of public affairs departments, allows brands and organisations to reach new audiences, but also compels them to provide content for people in a steady stream, to be consumed in a time of their own choosing. If government organisations fail in doing so, they can be sure there will always be other content available, ready to compete for peoples' attention. Organisations also need to coordinate their core messages with each other in a strategic manner and utilize complementing methods to amplify their messages, such as using several social media channels to spread the messages.

5.5 Finding 5: Knowing the target audience and the platform is a basis for success

From a citizen's point of view, YouTube content produced by government organisations is no different than any other content but is consumed and shared according to the same principles. If the potentiality of the platform's culture of participation is not utilized in government YouTube operations, a large portion of potential audiences is not reached, and opportunities are lost.

Several government security organisations have opted to disable comments on their videos. The reason behind their decisions are probably diverse and might be different with each operator, but likely include concerns about negative or inappropriate comments and the amount of work required for moderating the discussion. Public sector organisations might not have a lot of resources to put into moderating. An easy solution might therefore seem to be to disable comments altogether.

Given the participatory nature of YouTube, it seems that this approach is often chosen because the driving forces of the platform are not fully understood, or at least not embraced. If commenting in a YouTube channel's videos is not enabled, the channel operator effectively disables a way of engaging with the citizens. By blocking the ability to discuss matters on the very platform where the content is published, the operator drives discussion exclusively on different platforms; to ones the operator has no control over, such as video responses on other YouTube channels or other social media services.

It would be advisable to study the organisations goals, target audiences and publishing platforms in order to produce the messages within parameters that would resonate better with the audiences and the medium to begin with. The processes and tools provided by the platform to deal with trolling and spamming users can be employed to reduce the moderation workload. Such processes include blacklisting comments containing predefined expletory words and hiding distracting users from the channel. Enabling discussion should be a positive thing. The most engaged (more liked) comments are given priority by Google's algorithms and are presented first, thus allowing users to participate in the moderating process.

5.6 Finding 6: The importance of understanding the peer vs. expert dynamics

YouTube creators are considered by their followers to be particularly credible because of their amateurish and plain backgrounds, and at the same time to be experts in their own fields, such as gaming, lifestyle or health (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki 2018). This makes them particularly effective in disseminating messages and validating new ideas. Existing research indicates that perceived similarity of the content creator results in more trust than perceived expertise, particularly among young people (Paek et al. 2011). Paek et al. also establish that messages on YouTube from a perceivably similar creator are seen more favourably than an individual or organisation with issue expertise if audience is low-involved in the matter, while more high-involved audiences are more influenced by the quality of arguments and content than the creator's similarity.

This has impacts on public security and safety organisations' YouTube strategies when they are planning content and message dissemination, since the organisations' perceived expertise is typically deemed very high and their similarity rather low. This is validated, for example by the vaccine-hesitancy examples, as discussed earlier (Madathil et al. 2015).

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of knowing the medium is an integral undertone in all of this research's findings. Only by knowing the publishing platform, its culture, the audience and the constitution of the underlying commercial and social factors can effective content be produced. Emphasis must be given to understanding both content-related and 'content-agnostic' factors such as the contextual environment where the content might be consumed and the emotional mindset of the target audience. The organisation must be able to produce content capable of evoking a sense of authenticity and creating interaction between the organisation and the general public; value must be created for the audience. Otherwise, the opportunity to get the organisation's voice heard and amplified is reduced to mere broadcasting. The ability to create clear and focused narratives as well as tell compelling stories while reaching adequate technical quality, such as high-quality sound and photography, is critical. Likewise, YouTube's ability to generate actual citizen involvement and engagement should be fully utilised.

To counter the negative effects of perceived issue expertise (Paek et al. 2011; Madathil et al. 2015), government organisations should consider using peer-relatable people, such as YouTubers, as spokespersons in their products if the target audience is low-involved in the matter. The audience behaviour should be closely monitored and if deemed necessary, the peer vs. expert dynamics should be adjusted. Peer and expert dynamics in YouTube also demonstrate the importance of understanding the medium and its participatory culture. To get the message shared and amplified, it is vital to employ as many users as possible to repeat the message (for example, share and comment on the video) in their own channels and other social media interactions.

International organisations, such as European Union, NATO and WHO are cooperating on both tactical and strategic levels to counter the destabilising and radicalising messages coming from outside and within societies (WHO 2014; European Union Institute for Security Studies 2016). In order to implement the messages, the organisations also explore the methods used by commercial marketing and advertising entities (Cornish et al. 2011; WHO 2014). Care should be taken to ensure that core strategic messages are implemented also on the tactical level content, such as individual government organisations' YouTube videos, in order to further amplify and focus the messages (Cornish et al. 2011). An example of both international cooperation and implementing the strategic messages on a single video level is the publication of identical videos between the Swedish and Finnish armed forces channels after a combined army exercise Northern Wind 2019, highlighting both armies' interoperability capabilities (Finnish Defence Forces 2019b; Swedish Armed Forces 2019b).

Planning and consolidation of messages between societies' internal safety and security organisations' such as local police departments, rescue services and armed forces also supports and amplifies their individual messages, for example during natural disasters or large public events. The participatory nature of YouTube enables citizens to easily interact with the authorities by forms of engagement and by posting their own content. However, the underlying fact is that the government organisations' cooperation with the commercial third-party platforms such as YouTube is fundamentally forced and stemming from necessity (White House 2010; Mergel 2015; Prime Minister's Office 2016). The organisations decision makers and media managers should bear in mind that there is always a commercial motive underneath. Despite the possible positive results and good relations with the platform provider, all assets should not be positioned exclusively on a certain platform. The ongoing fragmentation of the media sphere ensures that even Google might one day lose its advantage. Different platforms should be used to complement each other, and they should be used interchangeably to target preferred audiences.

This research has contributed in the understanding of YouTube users' participatory and viewing behaviour and thus has provided foundations for government safety and security organisations' media managers in their YouTube strategies. YouTube's constantly

evolving technological and commercial ecosystem as well as the fragmentation of the media sphere ensure a constant need for future research. Foreseeable issues regarding safety and security organisations' use of YouTube include the implementation of the European Union's newly passed Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market (European Union 2019) and the ongoing development of the YouTube Premium service. Especially the EU Copyright Directive is expected to affect the operations of 'technology giants' such as Google and Facebook in significant ways.

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