Categorising YouTube

Simonsen, Thomas Mosebo

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Thomas Mosebo Simonsen

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This article provides a genre analytical approach to creating a typology of the User Generated Content (UGC) of YouTube. The article investigates the construction of navigation processes on the YouTube website. It suggests a pragmatic genre approach that is expanded through a focus on YouTube's technological affordances. Through an analysis of the different pragmatic contexts of YouTube, it is argued that a taxonomic understanding of YouTube must be analysed in regards to the vacillation of a user-driven bottom-up folksonomy and a hierarchical browsing system that emphasises a culture of competition and which favours the already popular content of YouTube.

With this taxonomic approach, the UGC videos are registered and analysed in terms of empirically based observations. The article identifies various UGC categories and their principal characteristics. Furthermore, general tendencies of the UGC within the interacting relationship of new and old genres are discussed. It is argued that the utility of a conventional categorical system is primarily of analytical and theoretical interest rather than as a practical instrument.

Introduction

One significant reason for the popularity of YouTube and the emergence of User Generated Content (UGC) is the site's accessibility (Lister et al., 2009, p. 227). Within seconds, anyone

can gain access to its content and in less than 10 minutes learn how to upload audiovisual material to the site. Another explanation is the personalised viewing experience and the VOD-structure that contrast traditional television distribution (Cha et al., 2007). But the unlimited accessibility also turns YouTube into a boundless and heterogeneous medium platform. Here, anyone can be a creator and publisher without limitations. In a speech on new media, Habermas characterises this development as a lack of control. He warns against the "decentralisation of access to unedited contributions" on the Internet:

> Der begrüßenswerte Zuwachs an Egalitarismus, den uns das Internet beschert, wird mit der Dezentrierung der Zugänge zu unredigierten Beiträgen bezahlt. In diesem Medium verlieren die Beiträge von Intellektuellen die Kraft, einen Fokus zu bilden (2006, p. 4).

According to Habermas, the Internet medium is characterised by a loss of focus because there is no overall intellectual and cultural control (i.e., the lack of expert systems and dominant institutions), which then results in superficiality. This aversion to new media platforms seems exaggerated, although it raises the fundamental issue of how to make sense of and navigate the Internet. This is also stated by Giltrow and Stein, who make a similar argument: "Internet genres appear not to have the same obligatoriness and ritualized expectedness as non-Internet genres: this is meant by saying they are less 'focussed'" (2009, p. 11).

The lack of obligatoriness towards generic conventions on YouTube becomes evident if we take a quick glance at its varied content. Although YouTube provides categories for its users, it is also a melting pot of content where traditional genre conventions in many ways are inadequate. Fiction and non-fiction, television content, home-movies of pets and creative animations are placed in the same categories. This makes it difficult to make sense of YouTube and its content.

In this article, I argue that the boundless organisation of YouTube content is related to how users navigate on YouTube. Navigation on YouTube can be accomplished by the process of locating texts throughout the facilities of a digital database of audiovisual content (cf. Lovink, 2008; Kessler & Schäfer, 2009). This entails that navigation is also related to the technological infrastructure of YouTube, i.e., browsing mechanisms and metadata that organise and define the videos. When we examine YouTube, a pertinent issue is, therefore, how we distinguish and identify the different types of content and in which ways do the navigational structure and properties of YouTube have an impact upon these. And does the navigational structure of YouTube supersede the need for organising content through traditional taxonomic approaches? Moreover, these issues are relevant with regards to the methodological process of collecting data on YouTube, which to a large extent is defined throughout the processes of navigation.

This article addresses these issues through an investigation of the concept of genre in relation to YouTube and more specifically UGC. It argues that a pragmatic approach proves especially useful for providing an understanding of the typology of YouTube, since it also

involves a contextual focus on the navigational processes. The analysis draws on an empirical sample of videos, and it examines the processes of navigation.

Understanding genre

Since Plato and Aristotle, genre has been widely accepted as a principal practice of communication. There is common agreement on the understanding of genre as a tool of making sense in everyday situations as well as in discourses. Disagreement, however, becomes evident in the numerous discussions of different criteria (e.g., semantic or syntactic) as well as in the matter of genre stability and changeability. It has also been argued that a focus on genre instead of concrete texts could lead to reductionism (e.g., Briggs & Bauman, 1992; Stam, 2000). One approach for avoiding reductionism is to consider genres from a pragmatic perspective (e.g., Swales, 1990). Miller also proposes a pragmatic approach based in rhetorical action, in the sense that "it acquires meaning from situation and from the social context in which that situation arose"(1984, p. 163). Her approach foregrounds genre as a dynamic and elastic concept that is fundamentally not interested in aesthetics, but rather involves "conventions of discourses" (ibid.) based on contextual meaning. It is influenced by, for instance, institutional organisation and agency as well as media specific contexts. Miller regards genre as a fusion of form, content and situation and emphasises the last. This involves a focus on the relationship between motivation and situation. She focuses primarily on the *social action* that genre generates within agency. Through an analytical focus on YouTube, I will nonetheless maintain an emphasis on the significance of content as an important part of the pragmatic approach, which also includes the action related to the navigational processes of making sense of YouTube's content since users' reception of UGC must be regarded in close relationship with the world of the text and vice versa.

Interface and affordances of YouTube

The pragmatic approach, as developed by Miller, moreover pays little attention to the relationship between genre and the medium (see also Askehave & Nielsen, 2004). YouTube is not an independent medium, but a medium platform that functions as a database in the form of a facilitator for audiovisual content in which the social action can be regarded not only as utterances, but also through the use of the technological interface. The suggestion that the properties of the medium have an impact on, for example, the development of genres draws on the *medium theory* approach famously developed by McLuhan in the 1960s.

Drawing on the pragmatic approach, Shepherd and Watters (1999) emphasise, in their investigation of websites, the functionality of the medium, where "functionality refers to capabilities available in the new medium" (p. 1), i.e., how to interact with genre. This is useful in a genre analysis of websites as exemplified by Eliason and Lundberg (2006). Their analysis examines genre and active interaction among users.

Functionality is, however, a more complex matter on YouTube. This is reflected in the agency of YouTube, which is not exclusively based on interaction, but also on consumption as regular streaming. I shall thus refer to the aspects of functionality on YouTube from a wider perspective, as the media properties or as the *affordances* of YouTube's interface. These include commenting, rating and responding, but also meta-communication such as tagging. If we regard the affordances of YouTube in relation to the most basic understanding of Gibson's term, then an affordance of YouTube is what the site "offers" or "provides" for its users (Gibson, 1986, p. 127). In that sense, the affordances of YouTube also include accessibility (streaming software and uploading mechanisms) as well as institutional and social organisation (Hjarvard, 2008). Hence, this stresses the importance of navigation in terms of making sense within content.

Available search categories on YouTube

YouTube provides its users with accessible categories of different content. The categories are defined by the YouTube administration and specified by the creators, when they upload a video. At first it might appear to be a feasible approach to let creators characterise their own videos on the basis of available categories, but the insufficiency of this procedure is obvious when the categories are examined.

The categories are generally too wide and thematically tied. This is evident in reference to the category *Pets & Animals*. This category is based on the appearance of animals in a specific video, which basically could involve all genres and all types of content. A quick glance into the category reveals that the *Pets & Animals* category includes music videos, home movie videos, commercials, cartoons and Vlogs, or video blogging, which all seem to have been blended into the same category on the basis of the appearance of animals. In this category, there are, moreover, several examples of content that have nothing to do with animals, such as football highlights, fashion shows and computer programming. YouTube does not provide any key words or categorical characteristics, which are instead subjectively selected by the creators. YouTube only provides labels derived from other media platforms like the television programme *America's Funniest Home Videos.* This demonstrates that the "obligatoriness" and "ritualised expectedness" of these categories are characterised by greater fluidity than traditional audiovisual genres, and indicates that this lack of consistency and focus is a consequence of the absence of an explicit institution, transforming the navigating principles among the users of YouTube.

Some of the categories refer to already existing genres, which on YouTube involve divergent connotations, since the video format and process of producing and consuming differ from other types of audiovisual broadcasting. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the most popular browsing categories that automatically appear on YouTube's main homepage. Some of the videos correspond with the proposed category. For instance, this is the case with the videos in the *Music, Entertainment* and the *Film & Animation* categories.

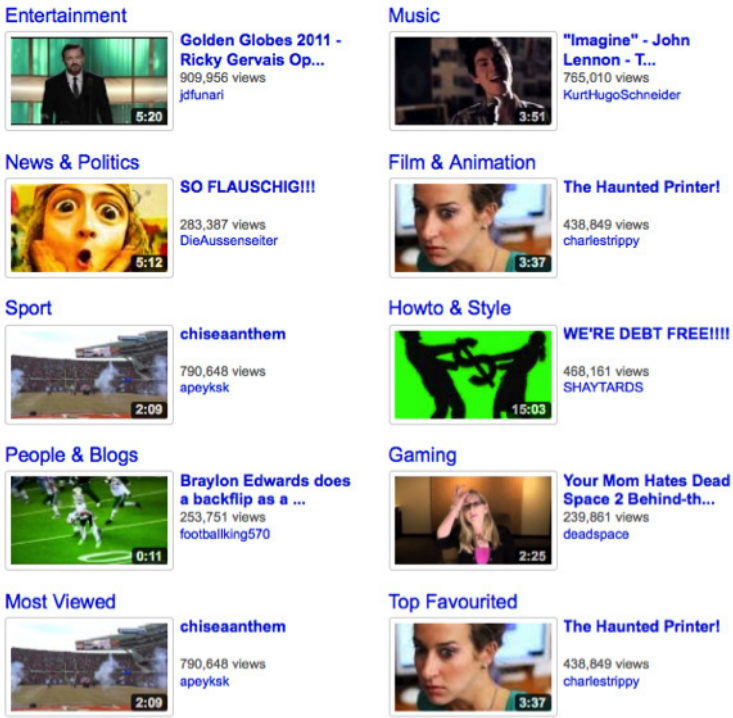

Figure 1
A frame grab of the most popular browsing categories on YouTube – 20.01.2011

But the videos in the *Sport, People and Blogs* and *Gaming* categories only partially correspond: for example, the video *chiseaanthem* is a musical performance, *Braylon Edwards does a backflip* is a sports highlight and the video *Your Mom hates Dead Space 2 Behind* is about gaming, but it is also a viral commercial. The two videos in the categories *News & Politics* (*So Flauschig!!!*) and *How to & Style* (*We're debt free!!!*) are of course categorised by the creators themselves, but they do not seem to correspond with the categories. Both videos are first person videos that emphasise direct user-interaction and they are more related to the so-called *Vlogs*. They should, in comparison to similar videos, be categorised within the *People & Blogs* or the *Entertainment* categories, where almost identical videos from the same creators can be found.

With this lack of consistency, it can also be argued that these categories are more differentiated than similar categories on other media platforms. The browsing categories moreover are limited to the most popular content, since each category only contains the 100 most popular videos. This is also the case with the other available categories, such as the most viewed, discussed and top-rated videos.

Content can also be found and browsed through using the "YouTube search engine". Its functionality helps to find material outside the popular sphere. That is, as long as users

already know the title or the creator of the video. If users type in random key words, the navigation process follows the same principle as the other browsing tools on YouTube, where the site primarily presents popular content before less popular content.

Tagging

The tagging tool is another way of navigating on YouTube. Videos on YouTube can be attached with a tagging option, where uploaders can add meta-data to their videos in the form of tags that direct viewers towards the video when they search through YouTube. Tags can be regarded as video IDs and they could therefore be helpful when creating genres. This, however, depends on the senders' consistency in using meaningful tags that are not just subjective selections of words. This is often compromised, since many videos include tags that are added in order to promote the video. Creators compete for visibility and their pursuit of fame and self-promotion often undermine the typological importance. Even though some creators use relevant tags, the YouTube interface implicitly prevents many of these videos from being found. Based on previous video searches, YouTube automatically highlights the most popular videos with similar tags that users have watched earlier. These videos are grouped under the headline "Recommended for You". In that sense, users are driven towards the most popular videos. This search structure further gives video creators an incentive to attach more appealing tags and thereby more hits, despite adding information which in the very end is misleading. In that sense, YouTube is becoming a competitive platform striving for visibility (Wasko & Erickson, 2009; Westenberg, 2008).

Within the content of the videos, YouTube has also developed the *Annotation Tool*. It is an editorial tool that allows users to integrate signs and text layers, e.g., in the form of pop-up speech bubbles. Their main function is to link to other videos of the same producer and to encourage users to rate or subscribe. This rather chaotic co-existence of different content and the integration of annotations as well as links and comments characterise YouTube as a "Folksonomy" – a term coined by Thomas Vander Wal (2005, see also Bruns, 2008). On his website Wal describes meta-data like tags as "bottom-up social classification" (Wal, 2005), where users, despite the lack of focus, are able to communicate through specific and conventional codes and links generated by YouTube.

The dominance of popular content

Access to videos on YouTube is designed as a VOD-system, but when the YouTube administration through the main website organises and presents videos for the users, the already popular videos are maintained on the website in the front, along with the videos with the most views and highest ratings. Dijck also underlines this:

> YouTube users are steered towards a particular video by means of coded mechanisms which heavily rely on promotion and ranking tactics, such as the measuring of downloads and the promotion of popular favourites (2009, p. 45).

This principle is an example of *The Rich-Get-Richer* (Simons, 2008, p. 246) and what Cha at el. refer to as *Information Bottleneck* (2007, p. 3), where non-popular content or niche videos are less likely to be found, since the popular content is dominating the YouTube interface. Through the Information Bottleneck, YouTube becomes a homogenous and hierarchical top-down controlled medium platform. The site is indirectly controlling what content you will find when browsing the server.

The principle of highlighting particular content has resulted in a vacillation between a bottom-up structure, where producers create and upload less popular UGC, and a top-down structure, where the most popular UGC are consumed. Researchers have previously described the gap between UGC and non-UGC (Burgess & Green, 2009; Landry & Guzdial, 2008), but it can also be argued that the discrepancy exists within UGC. One explanation for this vacillation is that commercials, since the Google Inc. take over in November 2006, have been attached to the videos and companies can buy promotion in the most popular categories, thus providing certain UGC with an increasing commercial value (Wasko & Erickson, 2009). YouTube has moreover sponsored YouTube Partners of UGC, who are paid for the amount of views, subscriptions and high ratings their videos receive.[1]

Overall, the browsing categories, the tagging system, the promoted content categories and search-options are tied to YouTube's interface, and it has become impossible to navigate systematically without instantaneously reaching the most shared and popular content. Hence, this organisational structure indirectly designs the content on YouTube and in that sense the affordances exemplified in the interface and design of the website serve a co-creating role in constructing genres on YouTube.

An aspect that has not been touched upon is the exterior viewing of videos through linking from online newspapers and soft-news programmes on television, as well as Facebook and Twitter. Most videos are attached with statistical data and it is by this means possible to investigate a video's statistical data. It is beyond the scope of this article to track the statistical data of each video, but a random check of the different videos from the sample, which will be analysed below, reveals that most of the videos have not received any noticeable views from exterior links. A small number of videos, with primarily clips of music and film celebrities who are famous beyond the YouTube community, have a higher percentage of the views accounting for exterior links, while most of the videos that were randomly checked have much less of their views from exterior links. The role of exterior linking appears therefore to be of less importance than the affordances specifically related to YouTube's website.

A final notion on genre is intertextuality. Intertextuality is especially relevant in regards to changeability and the dynamism of genres.

The intertextual dimension

Since navigation through content is no longer performed by institutional labelling and framing, the demands for digital literacy and individual cultural knowledge are accordingly foregrounded on YouTube. If users want to make sense of the content, they are forced to navigate and communicate through the cultural knowledge they receive by interacting with other users, in which case intertextuality is a helpful tool of communication.

Deriving from Bakthin's notion on dialogism, Kristeva (1980, pp. 64-65) argues for an intertextual understanding of discourses that stresses dynamism and polyphony, but also involves the cultural context that is a further focal point in the pragmatic approach (see also Briggs & Bauman, 1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). As a *cultural practice* (Fiske, 1987) or as *horizons of expectation* (Todorov, 1990), genre also implies intertextuality in terms of recognition and as fundamental knowledge for navigating through established genres. Drawing on this, Palmer (1990) proposes that generic expectation can also be juxtaposed with Goffman's concept of *Frame Analysis* (1984). With Goffman's framing concept, we thus broaden the understanding of genre as a mode to perceive the social reality. This bridges a pragmatic understanding of genre (including the affordances of YouTube) to socio-cultural methods (in which intertextuality is embedded). Building on this, both Askehave and Nielsen (2004) and Miller and Shepherd (2009) suggest that intertextuality is embedded in the Internet through its properties, which overtly connect different texts with each other. Intertextuality in relation to YouTube is accentuated as a consequence of the navigation processes such as linking structure, tags and annotations. In that sense we can also regard intertextuality as an affordance of YouTube.

With a pragmatic genre approach, it can be illustrated that the formation of genres, of course, depends on form and content, but also equally on the organisational structure of YouTube developed by Google (including the technological affordances) that very much determines how users and creators can consume and navigate through content. This furthermore has a bearing on how collecting empirical data from available browsing categories on YouTube consequently will be influenced by promoted strategies and why certain content most likely will appear in a sample of YouTube content.

Methodological approach

The methodological scope presented in this article draws on the empirical research of my dissertation. Nine hundred videos were collected in July 2010. They were selected from among available browsing categories on the YouTube website and represent a sample of the most popular content of YouTube. The videos were collected from three different categories reflecting different levels of user activity. This includes viewing, discussing and rating.[2] Each of the three main groups is divided into temporal groups. Since each category is juxtaposed in the browsing categories presented by YouTube, with no hierarchical division between them, the three groups can be considered as comparable groups of the most popular content

of YouTube. In that sense, the browsing categories of YouTube present promoted content, but in contrast to television, where the criteria for visibility is primarily registered in viewing ratings, the criteria for visibility on YouTube is also founded in user-interaction throughout comments, subscriptions and video responding. I selected the following available categories from the YouTube website: a) "All time", b) "This Month" and c) "Today".

Through the temporal distinction, both old and new videos are included in the sample in order to broaden the data. And through this temporal distinction, videos with relatively few views or few comments are also included. This results in a sample that, at the time of collecting the data, included videos with 285,000,000 views in the most viewed of *All Time* category as well as videos with down to 300 views in the *Top-rated of Today* category.

After the removal of duplicates and non-identifiable content, there are a total of 738 videos. The focus is on the UGC, and I have therefore excluded other types of content. An initial step to distinguish UGC from other type of content is in terms of agency.

The videos on YouTube can be divided into two overall groups of producing agents who are referred to as the "Amateurs" and the "Professionals". On one level, the distinction between amateurs and professionals is straightforward. As Buckingham argues: "an amateur receives no financial payment of their participation in an activity, while a professional does" (2009, p. 32). This distinction is, however, as Buckingham also underlines, difficult to maintain – especially with the emergence of the YouTube Partner Programme. Leadbeater and Miller describe agency as an accelerating blurring concept using the term "Pro-Ams" (2004), which bridges professional and amateurs. On YouTube, this hybrid exists in between the polarity of amateur and professional video production. The culture of Pro-Ams has spread, and many producers of UGC are now producing videos for YouTube as their main profession (e.g., YouTube partners, sponsored promoters).

This blending of amateurs and professionals is also one of the principal characteristics of the participatory culture described most notably by Jenkins (2006). It involves a growing empowerment of the users, who have become far more operative users and are simultaneously increasingly visible. Bruns describes this as a transformation into *produsage*, where he regards users and producers as merged into a *produser* (2008). While Bruns' term fits perfectly with, for instance, *Wikipedia*, the users on YouTube are not both producers and users per se (Dijck, 2009).

The level of participation and involvement depends on the function and type of consumption of videos. The understanding of agency must therefore be defined within this context in which users and creators are not solely *produsers*, but are just as much traditional producers and consumers. The process of creating UGC in that sense involves an adaptation of commercial business strategies that gradually will result in a gap between the ordinary "amateur" producers and "Pro-ams", who have adapted the mechanisms of social networking and amateur-style and turned it into cultural and economic profit.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish between ordinary users who are merely publishers and the YouTube celebrities who now dominate the popular sphere of YouTube. For the

same reason, the act of distinguishing between UGC and traditional professional content becomes progressively more difficult. This act is, however, still possible through a focus on the particular form and content as well as distributional methods.

A useful distinction is between primary and secondary distribution of the YouTube content. Primary distribution contains content that is produced with the purpose of distributing it on YouTube and this includes all UGC. UGC includes self-presentational videos, video diaries, humoristic and political statements as well as emotional and parodic confession videos. Videos of the secondary distribution group include content that has primarily been produced for other media platforms such as television and cinema. A large group of film and music producers, politicians and television stations mainly use YouTube as both primary and secondary platforms. Videos made by these producers are represented in this article by two major categories: *Music Videos* and *Television Highlights.* Professional record companies that use YouTube as a promotional and regular streaming platform, usually upload the Music Videos and they can be identified through the sender. Through this distinction, UGC can be separated from other types of content.

It can be difficult to maintain a taxonomic distinction between the producers of UGC who use YouTube as primarily a distribution platform and the producers of Music Videos and *Television* Highlights. Therefore, the division on the basis of agency must also be accompanied by the identification of the content. The need to include content alongside agency is evident in regards to Television Highlights. The Television Highlights differ from Music Videos because they are uploaded by UGC creators, though not created by them and therefore not UGC. This content, for example, can be determined through television logos and professional studio setups. In these types of videos, the distinction is made through a combination of user agency and identification of the content.

Consequently, UGC is regarded as videos for which producers intend to create and distribute videos on YouTube, which have not already been distributed on any traditional platforms such as television or radio. Finally, a large group of UGC combines material from already existing content. These videos are made by mixing existing material with their own UGC and will be referred to as *Mashups*.

Based on the differentiation of agents and their distribution of content as illustrated in the pie chart below, this initial distinction results in a sample of 473 UGC videos.

Forms of UGC

One task of defining new genres is the necessity to outline the characteristics of a particular genre. Tudor has referred to this as an *empiricist dilemma:*

> We must first isolate the body of films which are 'Westerns'. But they can only be isolated on the basis of the 'principal' characteristics, which can only be discovered from the films themselves after they have been isolated (1974, p. 135).

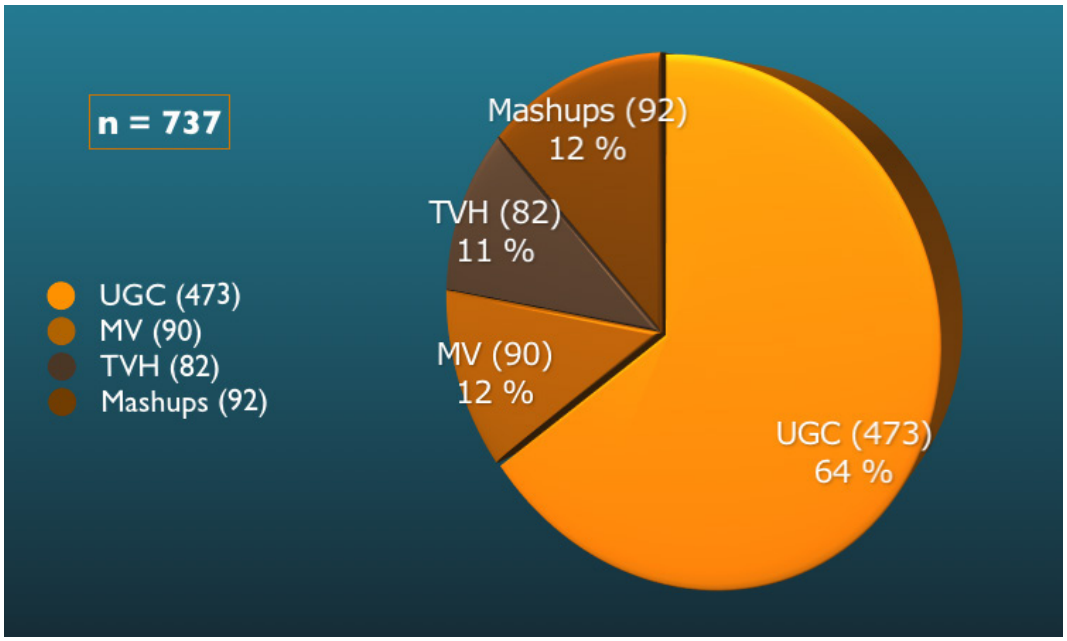

Figure 2

The distinctive appearances of content within each categorical group (where the three temporal groups are included) is illustrated below

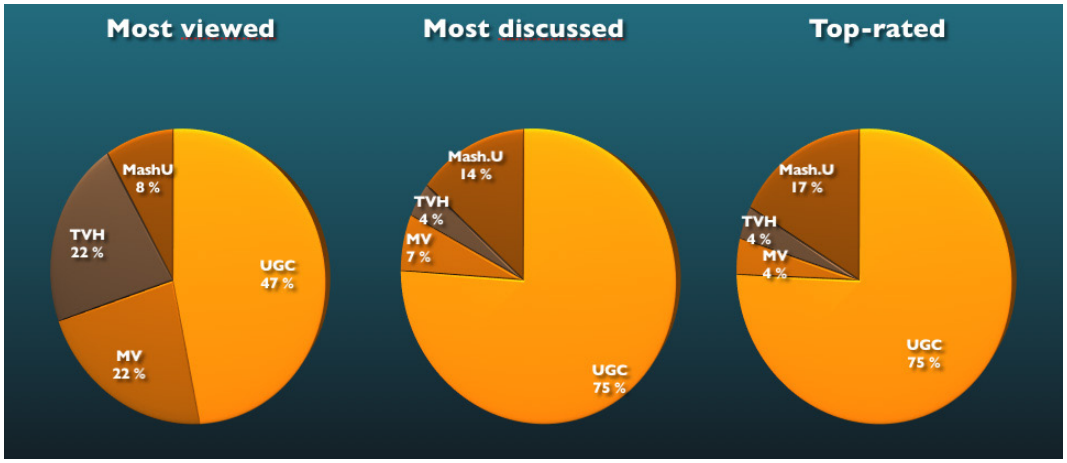

Figure 3

Figure 3 reveals that Television Highlights and Music Videos dominate the quantitatively largest group, while videos with a higher degree of interaction (in terms of discussions and ratings) are more dominated by UGC. Nevertheless, UGC still dominates the most viewed group, with 47% of the registered content, also supporting the findings of Burgess and Green (2009).

This dilemma also involves the YouTube categories that are suggested in this article. This article seeks to identify categories of YouTube, but in pursuance of doing so, their principle characteristics must be described. And in order to describe these, we must first isolate the body of the videos. Within the coding process, the use of predefined categories was therefore necessary to differentiate the videos, and in that sense, this results in an empiricist dilemma. This entails that the categories described in this article derive from provisionally defined categories based on an initial observation of 900 videos in 2009. From this observation, the videos in the sample from 2010 were subsequently assigned additional characteristics, such as keywords and form of communication in the coding process. Young also touches upon this dilemma and states:

> We cannot exclude our own critical and theoretical acts of typification (…) each analysis is merely one expression of genre knowledge among many, one that subverts the very idea of 'pure' genre categories (2008, p. 232).

Therefore, we should not regard the definition of UGCs in this article as unique categories, but rather as proposed categories that by the above-mentioned process analytically can be navigated through. It is, nevertheless, possible to observe the occurrence of each genre and describe their principle characteristics. The predefined genres and their characteristics are shown in the figure below:

The coding scheme was designed in *File Maker Pro*, where the proposed UGC categories were integrated along with temporal groups, the overall types of videos (UGC, Music Videos (MV), Television Highlights (TVH) or Mash Ups), the registration of sender, as well as the length of the video (in order to identify the videos). To identify the principle characteristics of the UGC genres, a number of key words were added. These include:

- **Thematic registrations** – e.g., *family*, *domestic* and *holiday* themes.
- **Form registrations** – e.g., *credits, first person, camera, voice over, transformed look/ voice* and *background music.*
- **User-interaction registrations** – e.g., *meta-commenting*[3], *intertextuality*[4], *competitions* and *explicit user-interaction.*
- **Affordance-based registrations**[5] – e.g., *annotations, commercials* and *screen-tags*

Forms of communication

Finally, various forms of communication were also included. These forms are adapted from Nichols (2001) distinguishes between six forms of communication: the *expository*, the *observational*, the *interacting*, the *reflexive*, the *performative*, the *poetic*, and furthermore, he includes fictional or dramatic elements. I will not go into detail regarding each form of

UGC Category	Predefined Characterisation
Vlogs	The Vlog is a form of video blogging that is presented through a first person camera and communicates directly to the viewer. It includes a wide spectre of autobiographical confessions and everyday depictions as well as product demonstrations. Another characteristic is the foregrounded focus on the creator and on the self-representative role.
Musical Performances	This category is dominated by self-presentational videos which are always presented within a musical performance. E.g. a cover number, a UGC music video or an audio number added a graphic layer. Therefore, they are not exclusively characterised by the visual presence of the creator. Compared to the Vlogs they often intend to communicate artistic skills of the video creator rather than autobiographical or personal issues.
How to & Instructional	Rather than to create a self-representation, the creator of the video presents a specific artefact or instructs the viewers in a given act. The form can be first person camera as well as a voice over with a visual illustration. Focus is on the object being presented and not on the presenter. Moreover, this category often involves a learning aspect and is less likely to involve autobiographical or artistic expressions.
YouTube Moments	The term derives from the "Kodak Moment", which signals a rare and one time occasion being captured. The YT Moments are recordings without an informative context and coincidental home video recordings of both dramatic and humoristic events. The creators of these videos can normally be identified i.e. through voice over. There is therefore no guarantee that the sender of these videos is also the creator.
Artistic & Lyrical	These videos have an emphasis on the aesthetic expression and foreground audiovisual form rather than content and rhetorical self-representation. In these videos there are also many graphic elements and animations are frequently integrated.
Political Statements	This category is identified through its thematic content tied to a political argument. The videos integrate rhetorical argumentation through signs and voice over. In this category, the creator is implicitly present in the videos, but can also be visible in front of the camera.
Short Narratives & Sketches	This category is identical with the fictional short narrative film. Most of the videos are staged sketches played by actors or by the creators playing a fictional role.
Parodies	Parodies are similar to the Short Narratives, but different in terms of their reference to other texts, which they imitate. This category also includes parodic comments in the form of video responses (involving the pastiche, the travesty and the caricature).
Interview & Reportage	This category has resemblance to the Vlogs, but is different since focus is not necessarily on the creator of the video, but just as much on surroundings (e.g. interviewees and events). This category is also identified by a reportage style (often handheld) instead of a first person camera. These videos primarily depict everyday situations or funny events rather than political issues.

Figure 4

representation, but simply refer to them as different modes of addressing the users. Based on initial observations of UGC, a clear tendency towards the appearance of non-fiction content was noticed. For that reason, the coding scheme has an emphasis on forms of representation rather than fictional forms. This aspect also reflects a classic taxonomic distinction between discourses of fiction and non-fiction, which has also been integrated into the coding scheme, where the possibility of a mix of fiction and non-fiction has been added.

All of the above-mentioned elements were integrated into the coding scheme as illustrated in Figure 5.

Inter-rater reliability

In order to provide the data with a high degree of reliability, two coders coded the same 900 videos, and with inspiration from Landry and Guzdial (2008) and Molyneaux et al. (2008), an inter-rater reliability test (x^2 test) of data homogeneity was conducted, which indicated reliability between the coders.[6]

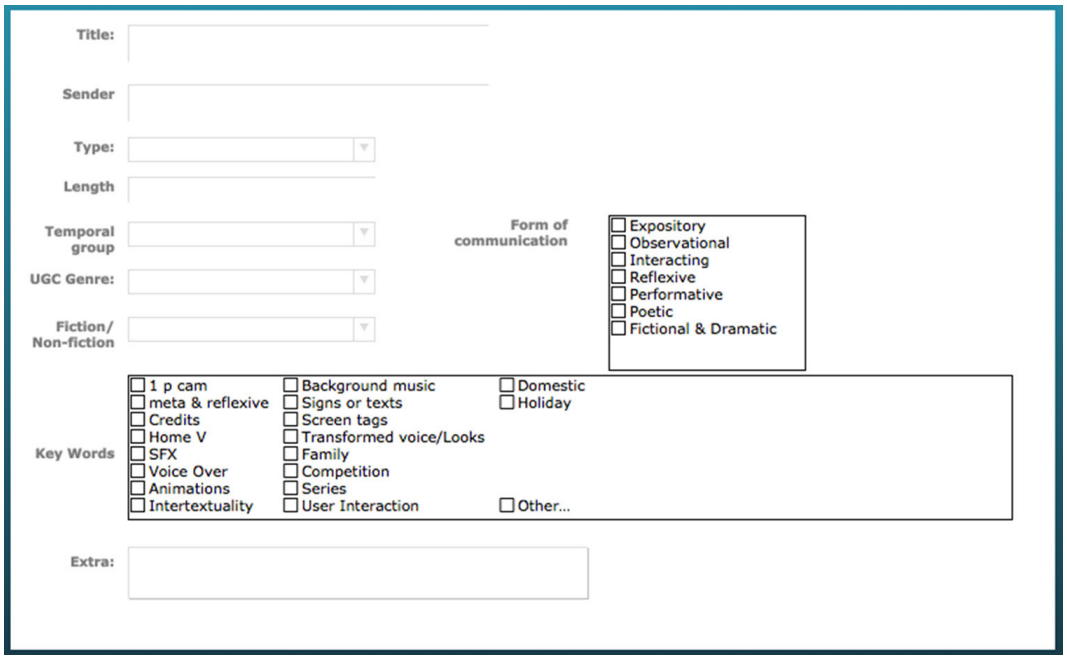

Figure 5

Results

Through the coding scheme, it is possible to describe each UGC category with further detail, as well as to determine the frequencies for each category. The frequencies of the categories are illustrated in Figure 6.

In the following, each category is described briefly based on the most relevant characteristics of the observations. This is followed by a discussion of the general registrations and how the different components of the genre model affect this. The categories are listed in no specific order.

Vlogs – 215 (45.5%)

The *Vlog* category dominates the sample and confirms the observations made by Burgess and Green, who also registered a high proportion of Vlogs in their sample (2009, p. 53). Further, intertextuality represents a high proportion (68%), and the use of meta-commentaries (82%) even higher. The latter indicates an explicit self-reflection, where the creators integrate the process of making videos. This aspect is also indicated by the high integration of annotations (64%) that function as paratextual comment tracks, which encourage users to subscribe, rate or link to other videos. The dominant form of representation is the performative (82%), which according to Nichols (2001) is characterised by the creator's subjective mode and performative role that is adapted to the social space of YouTube. Finally, traditional home movie themes (cf. Chalfen, 1987), such as the filming of domestic (40%), holi-

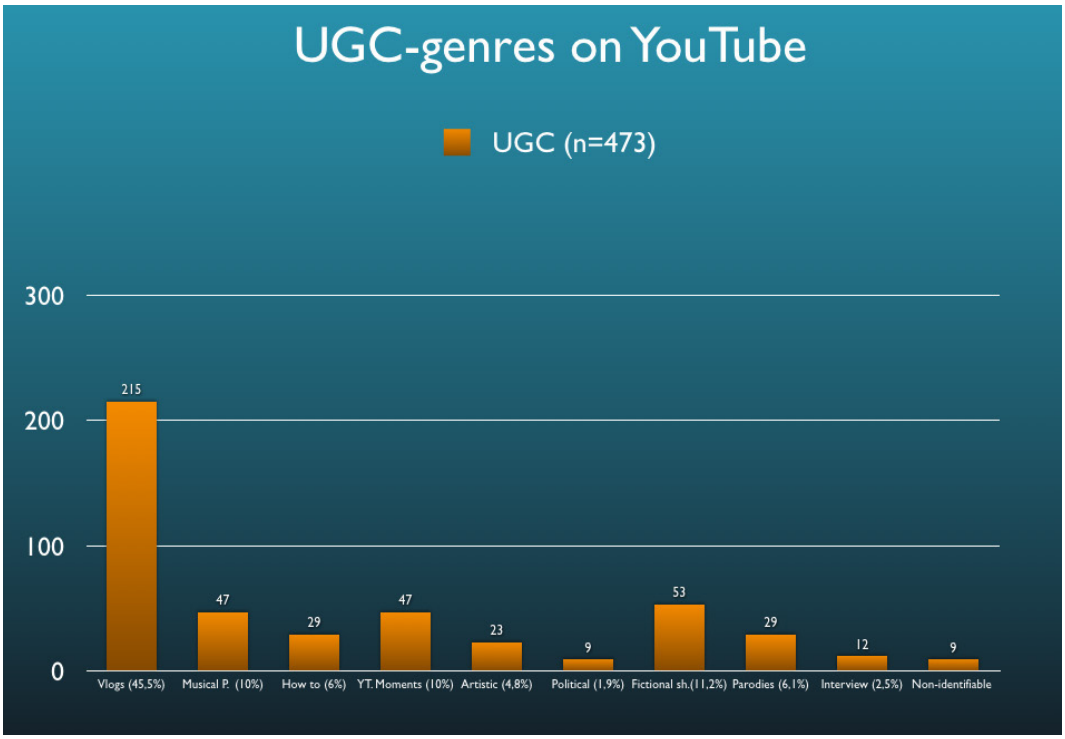

Figure 6
UGC categories (473 videos)

day (9%) or family (20%) situations are less apparent in the Vlogs category. Although still noticeable, this indicates a change of audience from private family members to the involvement of public users who demand a higher degree of entertainment and performance.

Musical performances – 47 (9.9%)
The aspect of self-presentation is also present in the *Musical Performances* category. This category involves both first-person videos (44%) and home video recordings (19%), while a third type of musical performance includes user generated music videos (36%). This category reflects both existing music video conventions and is also a parallel to popular reality shows such as *America's Got Talent* and *The X-factor*. The primary judgments in the television shows are made by judges, while the judgements in the musical performances are based on user ratings (57% of the videos in the category are from the Top-rated category). In that sense, the user-interaction affordances of YouTube replace the generic characteristics of the physical judge.

How to – 29 (6%)
The *How to* category is primarily characterised by a didactic form of representation (93%) and partially by the use of voice-over (44%) rather than first-person camera (24%). This cat-

egory further includes a high degree of meta-commenting (72%) and a rather high appearance of intertextuality (44%). The high rate of meta-commenting is related to a "behind-the scene" role that many of the videos have, since they are explanations and illustrations of how the UGC was made, also indicated by the highest percentage in the sample of the reflexive representation form (24%). This category is primarily informative and less aesthetically orientated and has the lowest use of SFX (6.8%).

YouTube moments – 47 (9.9%)

The *YouTube moments* are characterised by a high dominance of the observational form (94%) that in many ways resembles the home video format known from, e.g., *America's Funniest Home Videos*. This category is dominated by the videos with the highest views (69% are found in the most viewed categories). The videos are primarily registrations of everyday reality without much use of narrative forms (only 4% of the videos include credits, 10% involve background music). None of the videos include direct user-involvement, and, further, it is the category with the lowest percentage of intertextuality (25%) and meta-commenting (14.5%).

Artistic and lyric – 23 (4.8%)

This category, as described in the pre-defined characteristics, emphasises aesthetics. Therefore it is no surprise that the dominating form of communication is the poetic form (74%), which according to Nichols (2001) highlights aesthetic codes. It is also the category with the highest involvement of animations (56%), SFX (35%) and background music (74%).

Political statements – 9 (1.9%)

The smallest category in the sample is the *Political Statements* category. The videos in this category are predominantly expository (89%), and it is the category with the largest proportion of voice-over (55.5%), where the use of signs and texts are frequently integrated (78%). One explanation for the relatively low proportion of political statements is because this is a sample of popular culture on the premises of entertainment, while much of the political content on YouTube is found within smaller channels that are absent from the most popular browsing categories.

Fictional short movies & sketches – 53 (11.2%)

This is the second largest category, and it resembles the narrative and plot structure known from the television and film media. This is indicated by a relatively high use of credits (51%) and signs and texts (49%). Forty-one percent of the videos were registered with a high production value. Rather surprisingly, forty-two percent of the videos also include a meta-commenting layer that comments on the production process, which turns the viewer's attention away from the diegetic world of the video.

Parodies – 29 (6.1%)
The *Parodies* are intertextual on the basis of their imitation of other texts, and it is therefore no surprise that this proportion was very high (91%). The majority of these videos, furthermore, have been coded as fictional (94%), which includes parodies on other categories (30% imitate music videos), other traditional film genres or trailers. This mix of references to already existing genres also reflects the registrations where no characteristic key words seem to dominate.

Interview and reportage – 12 (2.5%)
This category could also be considered a subgenre to the Vlogs, since it also focuses on the role of the creator, but in a less performative and self-promoting way. It is instead characterised by the interacting form of communication (75%), where the creator takes on the role of an interviewer either through reportages or studio set-ups. They have a high proportion of meta-communication (67%) and high integration of signs and texts (67%), and are all coded as non-fiction.

General observations

These categories are fluid and contain many subgenres and cross-genres that overlap; but based on the registrations and consistency among coders, I argue it is possible to distinguish UGC categories using registrations, which can serve as a useful analytical tool.

With a proportion representing 46% of the UGC, Vlogs dominate this sample, but across the different categories, the overall rates of intertextuality (59%) and meta-commenting (59%) are noticeable. The use of intertextual codes can partly be explained by the implementation of already existing categories, such as the fictional shorts and parodies, as well as musical performances. But the high dominance of intertextuality also reflects the communication through culturally shared codes of what can be interpreted as a form of YouTube literacy. The use of intertextuality can be regarded as a communication discourse of YouTube that reflects both the socio-cultural everyday life in accordance with Goffman, but also as the transformation of the institutional organisation of centralised media platforms towards more differentiated and decentralised media platforms.

To argue that YouTube has evolved into completely new genres is to ignore the clear resemblance and inspiration from the television and film cultures that many of the UGC categories in this sample also mirror. In regards to this, it is also worth noting the appearance of non-fiction. In this sample, 58% were coded as non-fiction. Although reflecting a tendency, it can be drawn as a parallel to the so-called *Reality movement*, which has been analysed in television content (Jerslev, 2002) as well as a great deal of the content on the Internet (cf. Miller & Shepherd, 2009). An interesting aspect is that a large number of the videos coded as non-fiction also contain meta-comments. In many of the UGC coded as non-fiction, the creators turn the viewers' attention towards the filmic process, thus breaking the repre-

sentational space of the non-fiction video. This results in a form of communication that is somewhat different from, e.g., news programmes and traditional documentaries, but not necessarily less authentic. This aspect can moreover be related to the viewing process on YouTube, in which a video is enclosed by links, demographic stats, signs and texts which all remind the audience of the viewing situation and thereby naturalise the integration of meta-commenting compared to the traditional cinematic experience as argued by Metz (1982) for example.

The main affordances such as linking and commenting have not been registered in this article, since they are meta-data or paratextual layers surrounding the content of the video. Within the content of the videos, the use of annotations has been registered and the overall percentage of 57% indicates that the use of direct links and additional content information are integrated into UGC and contribute to the meta-commenting and informative levels of the videos. The annotations also contribute to YouTube's flow and characterise aspects of the navigation process within the UGC as a *folksonomy*. This folksonomy basically supersedes the need for the construction of a formal typology, since users can choose to navigate through annotations, thus excluding the taxonomic choice that the cinema audience for example makes use of.

The competitive and hierarchical structure of YouTube favours popular content, where certain trends seem to predominate the majority of the content. This includes the self-reflecting first-person role that can be described as a performance representational form (48%), a proportion that of course is highly mirrored in the dominance of the Vlogs, but nonetheless reveals a particular consistency in the sample. Furthermore, of the 473 videos in this sample, there are only 240 different senders, also illustrated by a high percentage of videos that are a part of a series (59%). That the sample represents a rather homogenous group of YouTube creators is moreover revealed in the fact that the 10 most frequent creators account for 26% of all UGC in the sample. The so-called *Pro-ams* thereby seem to dominate this sample, also exemplified in the fact that the 10 most represented senders are all part of the YouTube Partner Programme,[7] i.e., those who are paid for visibility (ratings and subscriptions).

Conclusion

This article has identified aspects of the navigation processes on YouTube tied to technological properties and simultaneously recognised how in different ways these organise YouTube's content. The article has advocated a generic model based on a pragmatic approach that is extended to include a *medium theory* inspired focus on the affordances of YouTube. It demonstrates that the affordances provide a co-contributing role in the formation of UGC categories exemplified in the use of annotations, tags, link structure and comments that enable users to navigate outside conventional categories. The generic dynamism and changeability of YouTube are further expressed in an emphasis on intertextuality and meta-

commenting, which seem to be integrated in the proposed categories, and where already conventional content can be regarded in a new communicative context. These categories are characterised as a coexistence of antecedent genres and new genres. This is also a consequence of agency, institutional organisation and YouTube affordances, which provide the principal modes of navigation throughout UCG. The proposed categories in this article are by no means exclusive, but are specifically defined and referred to in the context of the outlined data sample.

With the integration of technological affordances along with the dominance of popular content and the competitive structure, the question inevitably posed is the following: is there a *need* for genres on YouTube? Does the lack of a traditional set of taxonomies really seem to matter for the further expansion of YouTube? When we look at the increasing number of videos that is currently being consumed, the immediate answer must be no. This is evident in the insufficiency of the already existing categories that are random and too thematically tied, but nevertheless present. Furthermore, the categories proposed in this article are not a necessary requirement for navigating on YouTube, but they are provided with a wider aspect of communication modes, user-interaction as well as aesthetic characteristics. On YouTube, conventional categories are therefore not indispensable navigation tools or cultural practices. The cultural practice of YouTube to some extent can be described as a *folksonomy* accentuated by the user-driven interface and technological properties. But as it has also been argued, users are forced to navigate through mechanisms controlled by the YouTube organisation, which consequently has created a competing environment where the popular content is being favoured, thus superseding the need for navigation through conventional typologies.

In conclusion, the creation of a typology of the UGC is therefore first and foremost useful in an analytical context, where a generic approach and understanding of the UGC is essential in order to navigate and comprehend an overview of the content of YouTube that otherwise would appear unsystematic and unfocused. It is, therefore, first and foremost of methodological usage within this sample as a process of identifying certain types of content.

Notes

1. The YouTube partner programme is described in detail here: http://www.youtube.com/t/partnerships_benefits.
2. The "rating" category, since the collection of data in 2010, has been removed as an available browsing category by YouTube.
3. Meta-commenting is understood as explicit reflections on the making of the videos.
4. The registration of intertextuality is concretely the registrations of oral, written or visual references to other discourses. Coders have been presented with a definition that is similar to the understanding suggested by Julia Kristeva (1980, p. 36).

5. The registrations of affordances are limited to the video itself, meaning that comments, links and ratings were not observed by the coders.
6. Following the argument of *statistical significance* (cf. Freedman et al., 1991), the null-hypothesis was rejected in the test, thus indicating a very strong degree of homogeneity among coders. But due to limited space, the results and data are not included in this article.
7. The 10 most represented senders in this sample are all represented on YouTube's official partner programme lists: http://www.youtube.com/channels?s=ms&t=a&g=5

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Thomas Mosebo Simonsen
PhD candidate
Department of Communication and Psychology
University of Aalborg, Denmark
tms@hum.aau.dk