



# **YOUTUBE IN RUSSIA:**

**A DRIVING FORCE OF RUSSIA'S  
CREATIVE ECONOMY**

2021



Prepared by AlphaBeta for Google

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## YouTube: A driving force of Russia's creative economy

**YouTube creates new income opportunities for content creators**



**72%**

of YouTube content creators in Russia get income from YouTube<sup>1</sup>



For **18%**

of YouTube content creators in Russia<sup>1</sup> YouTube is the major source of income



**93%**

of YouTube content creators in Russia note that YouTube had a positive impact on their lives<sup>1</sup>, including increasing their income significantly<sup>2</sup>



**47%**

of YouTube content creators agreed that YouTube helps them build business relationships in Russia<sup>1</sup>

**YouTube provides creatives with access to international markets**



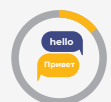
**60%**

of watch-time on content produced by YouTube channels in Russia come from overseas<sup>3</sup>



**36%**

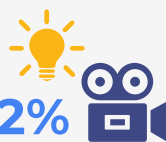
of YouTube content creators in Russia say that YouTube has helped them build business relationships worldwide<sup>1</sup>



**20%**

of YouTube content creators who indicate they generate income from YouTube in Russia translate their content into another language at least sometimes<sup>1</sup>

**YouTube helps individuals learn digital skills and get access to international content**



**42%**

% of users say that YouTube helps them in acquiring new digital skills<sup>4</sup>



**51%**

of users say they've chosen YouTube because it gives them access to the foreign content<sup>4</sup>

1. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021.

2. Other impacts include realizing one's goals creatively or professionally, gaining more self-confidence, being able to say that they have succeeded, and other positive changes in their lives.

3. Source: Google (2021), "Responsible Business Development and Creative Economy." Available at: [https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post\\_23.html](https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post_23.html)

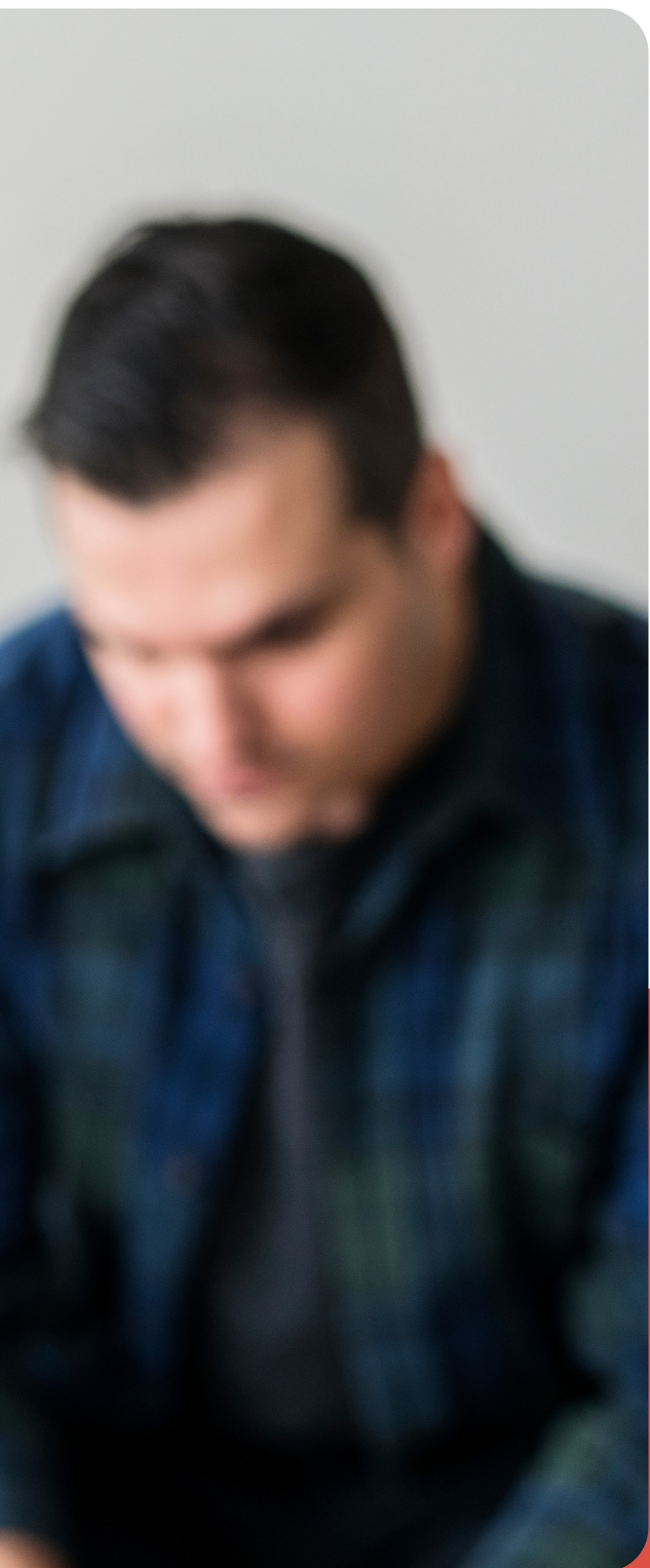
4. Based on a survey of 513 Internet users in Russia in March 2021.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



5. Sources include: Funk, M. (2020), Tubics. "How many YouTube Channels are there?." Available at: <https://www.tubics.com/blog/number-of-youtube-channels/>; Mediascope (2021), "Top-10 Resources." Available at: <https://webindex.mediascope.net/top-resources/projects>
6. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021.
7. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021.
8. Google (2021), "Responsible Business Development and Creative Economy." Available at: [https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post\\_23.html](https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post_23.html)





Hosting over 37 million channels from across the globe, YouTube is a popular online platform in Russia, with an average monthly viewership of around 80 million in the country.<sup>5</sup> It is a large driving force of Russia's creative economy, and has brought significant benefits not just to individuals who consume content on the platform, but also to those who create content, including individual YouTubers, media companies and other professional content creators. These benefits come in three key forms: creating new income opportunities for content creators, promoting access to international markets, and helping individuals learn digital skills and get access to international content.

By allowing content creators to monetize their content on the platform and earn income from other sources, YouTube provides a variety of income opportunities for content creators. For 18 percent of these individuals, creating content on YouTube forms a major source of their income.<sup>6</sup> Beyond monetizing their content on the platform, YouTube content creators are also able to leverage their YouTube presence to promote greater awareness of their content and brand. For example, content creators can gain additional income thanks to brand sponsorships and sales of merchandise associated with their YouTube brand.

YouTube also provides creators and creative entrepreneurs with access to international markets - this has not only allowed them to gain advertising incomes from overseas, but also enhanced the visibility of their brand globally. In fact, around 36 percent of these individuals say that YouTube has helped them build business relationships worldwide.<sup>7</sup> In addition, over 60 percent of watch-time on content produced by YouTube channels in Russia come from overseas.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, through a large variety of tutorial videos shared on the platform, as well as through curated programs by YouTube, YouTube is a useful platform for individuals to learn digital skills. At the same time, the platform provides viewers a wide range of videos by giving them access to international content.



## 1.1 YouTube creates new income opportunities for creatives in Russia

YouTube offers creative individuals, professionals, and organizations the opportunity to generate income from the content they produce. Through the platform, YouTube content creators are able to create and monetize videos touching on various topics such as entertainment, lifestyle, gaming, science and educational content, music, news and politics, sports, and tourism. Content creators in Russia also value the impact that the platform has on them. Overall, 93 percent of surveyed content creators indicate that YouTube has had a positive impact on their lives.<sup>9</sup> These include significantly raising their income, realizing one's goals creatively or professionally, gaining more self-confidence, being able to say that they have succeeded, and other positive changes in their lives.<sup>10</sup>

### CONTENT CREATORS ARE ABLE TO MONETIZE THEIR VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

YouTube has generated over USD30 billion of revenue to its global community of creators, artists, and media companies since 2018.<sup>11</sup> In Russia, YouTube content creators have also generated significant income from advertising placed on their videos, with 72 percent of surveyed content creators getting income from YouTube.<sup>12</sup> Beyond advertising, income and revenue from the platform can also come from other sources that leverage the creators' YouTube presence, such as brand sponsorships and merchandise sales. For individuals, income from YouTube advertising and other sources can be a critical livelihood - 18 percent of survey respondents indicate that the platform is a major source of income for them.<sup>13</sup>

### CONTENT CREATORS CAN LEVERAGE THEIR YOUTUBE PRESENCE TO EARN INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES

Beyond the income and revenue earned from advertising placed on their YouTube channels, YouTube content creators are also able to leverage their YouTube presence to promote greater awareness of their content and brand. YouTube content creators in Russia are able to gain income from other sources such as sponsorship from brands, donations or crowdfunding from subscribers, sponsorships from subscribers who have signed up for memberships with their YouTube channels or "channel memberships"<sup>14</sup>, YouTube users' purchases of viewer engagement tools such as "Super Chat" and "Super Sticker" on their channel<sup>15</sup>, and merchandise sales on the platform. Between March and May in 2020, globally, over two million YouTube users bought their first "Super Chat", "Super Sticker", or YouTube channel memberships to support their favorite YouTube content creators.<sup>16</sup>





## YOUTUBE DRIVES INCOME OPPORTUNITIES IN RUSSIA'S MUSIC INDUSTRY

The platform also allows music creators, artists, and media companies to generate income from sharing their original music over the platform, with YouTube having paid more than USD12 billion to the global music industry to date from ad and subscription revenues.<sup>17</sup> In fact, YouTube has over 30 million Music and Premium<sup>18</sup> paid subscribers all over the world (35 million if it includes users who are on free trials), providing YouTube content creators access to a large base of paying audiences.<sup>19</sup>

## YOUTUBE INCREASES THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF RUSSIA'S CREATIVE ECONOMY

By creating access to new sources of income, YouTube has increased the economic resilience of Russia's creative economy. For example, content creators are able to create and promote original content and earn income directly from advertising revenue, or even create partnerships with businesses and gain revenue from sponsorships. A survey of Russian content creators shows that 47 percent agreed that YouTube helps them build business relationships in Russia<sup>20</sup>, showing how the platform facilitates economic resilience for a significant number of these individuals.



9. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021. Based on YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia (2021), n = 121
10. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021. Based on YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia (2021), n = 121
11. Wojcicki, S. (2021). "Letter from Susan: Our 2021 Priorities". YouTube Blog. Available at: <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/letter-from-susan-our-2021-priorities/>
12. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021. Based on YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia (2021), n = 121
13. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021.
14. "Channel memberships" on YouTube allow viewers to join specific YouTube channels through monthly payments, and enjoy members-only perks such as "badges", "emoji", and other features.
15. "Super Chat" and "Super Sticker" are tools that YouTube viewers pay for that allow them to pin their messages or animated stickers at the top of the comment boxes during video live streams.
16. Hale, J (2020). Tubefilter. "In The Last 2 Months, 2 Million YouTube Users Have Bought Their First Super Chat, Super Sticker, Or Channel Membership." Available at: <https://www.tubefilter.com/2020/06/05/youtube-alternative-monetization-super-chat-stickers-live-merch-alerts/>
17. Rys, D. (202). "Why YouTube and the music biz are getting along better than ever." Available at: <https://www.billboard.com/articles/business/8550838/lyor-cohen-youtube-music-billboard-cover-story-interview-2020/>
18. YouTube Music is the platform's music streaming service which allows users to browse and listen to music videos, performances, and remixes online. YouTube Premium is the platform's subscription-based service that provides members access to content without going through advertising and premium YouTube Originals which showcases high-production quality content from various content creators.
19. Muscially (2020). "YouTube now has 30m music and premium subscribers globally." Available at: <https://muscially.com/2020/10/30/youtube-now-has-30m-music-and-premium-subscribers-globally/>
20. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021. Based on YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia (2021), n = 121



## 1.2 YouTube provides Russia's creatives with access to international markets

YouTube also provides content creators and creative entrepreneurs with access to international markets - this has not only allowed them to gain advertising income from overseas, but also enhanced the visibility of their brand globally.

### YOUTUBE HELPS RUSSIA'S CONTENT CREATORS AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS GO GLOBAL

YouTube helps provide content creators in Russia access to viewers in overseas markets, with 36 percent of surveyed content creators indicating YouTube has helped them build business relationships worldwide.<sup>21</sup> With over 60 percent of watch-time on content produced by YouTube channels in Russia coming from overseas<sup>22</sup>, the platform also provides Russian content creators an international reach.

Make-up artist Elena Krygina embodies an example of how YouTube has helped creative entrepreneurs in Russia go global. Since 2011 when she first set up her YouTube channel, her channel has amassed more than 800,000 subscribers globally.<sup>23</sup> Riding on her YouTube success, Krygina launched her own cosmetics line, "Krygina Cosmetics", in September

2018, which targets Russian-speaking audiences both locally and abroad.<sup>24</sup> In March 2020, she launched a limited collection of a cosmetics accessory bag, in partnership with the international sportswear brand Adidas.<sup>25</sup>

Russian YouTube channels have also gained popularity globally. One of the most popular Russian YouTube channels is the children's entertainment channel, "Masha and the Bear". Amassing over 100 billion views globally since its inception in 2014 (with one video titled "Masha plus Kasha" having received over 4.4 billion views and recognized in the Guinness World Records as the most watched animated video on YouTube), "Masha and the Bear" is one of the top three most popular children's entertainment channels in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (particularly for ages six and below), in terms of subscriber count.<sup>26</sup> The cartoon channel has also been translated into 42 different languages (using either YouTube's audio or subtitle functions)<sup>27</sup>, to cater to its large and diverse viewer base.

Box 1 shows another example of how the Russian band, Little Big, achieved international success through YouTube.

21. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021. Based on YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia (2021), n = 121

22. Google (2021), "Responsible Business Development and Creative Economy." Available at: [https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post\\_23.html](https://russia.googleblog.com/2021/08/blog-post_23.html)

23. Elena Krygina (2021), YouTube channel. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/elenakrygina/about>

24. Aulikh. S (2018), Buro. "Makeup artist Elena Krygina presented her own brand of cosmetics." Available at: <https://www.buro247.ru/news/beauty/28-sep-2018-krygina-cosmetics-launch.html>

25. MerchNews.RU (2020). "adidas and make-up artist Elena Krygina have released limited edition beauty bags for fitness." Available at: <https://merchnews.ru/creative/brands/adidas-i-vizazhist-elena-krygina-vypustili-limitirovannye-kosmetichki-dlya-fitnesa-9080/>

26. Sources include: Forbes (2020) "Parents should educate, not content." Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/forbes-woman/429367-vospityvat-dolzhen-roditeli-ne-kontent-intervyu-s-sozdatelyami-multfilma-masha-i>; TASS (2021), "Cartoon "Masha and the Bear" scored over 100 billion views on YouTube." Available at: <https://tass.ru/kultura/12308917>; AWN (2021), "Masha and the Bear" Feature in Development." Available at: <https://www.awn.com/news/masha-and-bear-feature-development>

27. TASS (2021), "Russia's super-hit cartoon, Masha and the Bear, enters Top 3 favorite entertainment brands." Available at: <https://tass.com/culture/1268419>





**Box 1.****Little Big: Eurovision-nominee and Internet sensation**

YouTube helps music creators feature and publish their music content to a wide, global audience, allowing them to achieve popularity and recognition easily. The story of the internationally famous Russian band, Little Big, showcases how the platform can become a launchpad for music creators to succeed.

Starting as a band among a group of like-minded friends in St. Petersburg, Russia, Little Big debuted its first music video titled “Every Day I’m Drinking” on YouTube on April 1, 2013. The video became an instant hit, achieving around 2 million views after two months, helping the band to secure a spot as the opening act for Die Antwoord, a South African hip hop group, in July within the same year.<sup>28</sup> With the help of their newfound success, the band launched its first album “With Russia From Love” in March 2014.



Picture source: <https://infinetwork.net/russia-little-bigs-uno-reaches-100-million-views-on-youtube-and-heading-to-pass-nettas-toy-in-views/>

The band also went on to launch more international viral sensations on YouTube, such as its pop-music video “Skibidi” which was released in 2018, and gained 23 million views in just one week.<sup>29</sup> The video now has more than 523 million views to date. The music video’s popularity even started a dance craze, with people all over the world trying to imitate the dance moves featured within the video and sharing it over the Internet.<sup>30</sup>

Thanks to their popularity, the band was nominated to represent Russia in the international Eurovision Song Contest in 2020, a song competition which primarily features contestants from European countries. The band produced another music hit titled “Uno” as their entry, with their YouTube video eventually becoming the most watched music video out of all other videos uploaded by Eurovision in history, gaining over 198 million views to date.<sup>31</sup>

28. Kashapov, R. (2013), Sobaka. “Little Big: If you want to change a country, you have to show it that way.” Available at: <https://www.sobaka.ru/entertainment/music/17254>

29. Eurovision.tv (2020), “Russia’s Little Big reveals “Uno” song and music video.” Available at: <https://eurovision.tv/story/russia-little-big-reveals-uno-song-and-music-video>

30. The Sun UK (2020), “Dance craze: What’s the Skibidi dance challenge and what’s the video from band Little Big about?.” Available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/7499013/skibidi-dance-challenge-video-band-little-big/>

31. Langford, J. (2021), NME. “Little Big will not be representing Russia at Eurovision 2021.” Available at: <https://www.nme.com/news/music/little-big-will-not-be-representing-russia-at-eurovision-2021-289809>

On the other hand, YouTube has also been used as a channel for Russian content creators to share their knowledge of foreign cultures and languages. Box 2 shows how Dmitry Manayenkov has successfully

leveraged YouTube to educate Russian viewers about the English language in an engaging and lively manner.

## Box 2.

### Using YouTube to educate Russian audiences about a foreign language

If one is fluent in a foreign language, how does one best apply and share that knowledge? This was a question that Dmitry Manayenkov from the city of Vladivostok constantly pondered over. Graduating from university with a specialization in American Studies, Dmitry tried to apply his English language skills in various jobs tutoring, translating and working in a business, but none of them felt sustainable or fulfilling.

While he had toyed with the idea of creating a YouTube vlog to teach Russians the English language for over two years, he was too camera-shy to embark on this project. It was only after an incident in 2016, which he faltered on live television when he was interviewed by a crew on the streets, that finally prompted his determination to conquer his fear of the camera and start a YouTube channel.



Photo source: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DmitryMoreEn>

"English is much more than words and rules!" This is how Dmitry describes his YouTube channel. Through videos which he publishes twice a week, he educates viewers on how to study the English language, and encourages them to practice speaking in it without being afraid of mistakes. He also injects his videos with his characteristically self-effacing humor. Dmitry shares, "In my first ten or twenty videos, I was teaching myself how to film and edit, and wasn't thinking a lot about my brand. I put a selfie stick in a hookah base, attached the phone, and just filmed. At some point, I took notice of several fun formats on the English YouTube platform and decided to do a (weekly) morning show about the English language, where I would just share interesting things (about the language) and joke about stuff." With more than 100,000 subscribers and every video viewed more than a thousand times, Dmitry has gained a loyal audience over the years.

Through YouTube, Dmitry has found his voice and audience, and has successfully engaged a large Russian audience base keen to learn more about a foreign language. The experience has also given Dmitry a large confidence boost. As Dmitry puts it, "I was so afraid of the camera when I was starting out. I've changed a lot over these years, I began to talk differently, stopped being afraid, and started feeling truly at ease in front of the camera."

32. This survey was conducted with 121 YouTube content creators in Russia with a large propensity to monetize their content on the platform, and who have substantial viewership and subscriber bases. This survey was disseminated through Google's media partners to content creators directly in April 2021.



## WHILE CONTENT IS PRIMARILY DEVELOPED IN RUSSIAN, AUDIENCES ARE GLOBAL

Although most videos on Russian YouTube channels are produced in the Russian language, some leverage YouTube's translation features to cater to global audiences. The survey of YouTube content creators in Russia showed that 20 percent of those who generate income from YouTube translate their content into another language at least sometimes, indicating their appetite to reach a global audience.<sup>32</sup> Creators can use different tools to achieve this, including subtitles, voice overs, or both. YouTube also provides automatic translation of audio tracks into local language text, enabling all of its videos to be enjoyed by foreign audiences. In fact, there are localized versions of YouTube across 100 countries in over 80 languages, allowing content creators to reach out to audiences across the globe.

## YOUTUBE IS AN IMPORTANT OUTLET TO EXPRESS CREATIVITY AND ENGAGE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

YouTube is an important outlet for Russians to express their creativity and engage on social issues globally. The platform has also enabled individuals to raise awareness of social issues, such as female empowerment and charitable causes, through video-making. The story of 98-year-old Russian war veteran, Zinaida Korneva, offers a heartwarming example of how this was achieved during the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Box 3).

### Box 3.

### Zinaida Korneva: Connecting with global audiences to raise funds for doctors in Russia during the COVID-19 pandemic through YouTube

Wanting to help families of doctors who had passed away during the pandemic in Russia, Korneva created her very own YouTube channel to launch a campaign to raise funds for their families.<sup>33</sup> Inspired by Captain Tom Moore, a 100-year-old British war veteran who helped to raise money for "NHS Charities Together" in the UK by publicizing himself walking 100 laps in his garden<sup>34</sup>, Korneva sought to do the same at home in Russia. To raise money for the families of the late Russian doctors, Korneva shared her war stories over YouTube from March to May in 2020, encouraging viewers to donate as they listened to her stories.

In just four days, Korneva amassed more than RUB1.2 million (USD16,000) worth of donations from her viewers.<sup>35</sup> She eventually arrived at more than RUB4.5 million (USD60,000) by the end of the initiative, which was distributed to 135 families across different Russian cities.<sup>36</sup> Her efforts were even recognized by Russian president Vladimir Putin who awarded her a medal to honor her contribution.<sup>37</sup>



Picture source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/97-year-russian-veteran-raises-money-amid-coronavirus/story?id=70576049>

33. United Nations (2020), "Russian WWII vet raises funds to defeat Covid-19." Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/wwii-vet-raises-funds-defeat-covid-19>

34. Burchell, H. (2021), "Capt Sir Tom Moore: How the retired Army officer became a nation's hero." BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-52324058>

35. Kozlova, L. (2020) "I didn't believe that people would give money," Komsomolskaya Pravda. Available at: <https://www.spb.kp.ru/daily/27126/4210785/>

36. Saint-Petersburg TV (2020), "Zinaida Korneva, who raised 4 million rubles for medical families, will publish a book." Available at: <https://topspb.tv/news/2020/08/31/zinaida-korneva-sobravshaya-4-mln-rublej-dlya-semej-medikov-vypustit-knigu/>

37. Lenta.RU (2020), "Putin awards Russian veteran for raising money for doctors." Available at: [https://lenta.ru/news/2020/11/23/putin\\_nagrada/](https://lenta.ru/news/2020/11/23/putin_nagrada/)

The platform is also an effective channel for Russians to share more about their unique culture, heritage and religion. Box 4 shows an example of a

Russian woman from Saratov who has leveraged the platform to share more information about her Muslim faith.

#### Box 4.

#### ***Blog of a Muslim Woman: How YouTube is an effective channel of learning about different cultures and religions***

Russia is a country of many languages, religions and cultures. Aydan Mamedova, a journalist turned YouTube content creator in Russia, created her YouTube channel for viewers wishing to learn more about her religion, Islam. In her YouTube channel, *Blog of a Muslim Woman*, Aydan shares about her religion and the Muslim way of life, in clear and simple language. She also debunks common myths about her faith: Are Muslim women allowed to drive cars? What do Muslims celebrate? What pets do Muslims have? Aydan's channel provides answers to these and other questions.



Photo source: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPFWgQzgOLkia8F3FOXeY3Q>

Towards the end of 2015, Aryan started her YouTube channel with the sole purpose of sharing more information and educating people on her religion. Perceiving at the time a growing number of misleading stereotypes about her faith, Aryan felt that it was important that she make this step. She explains, "I thought, I cannot come to every house saying, 'Hello, may I tell you about my faith?' But every home has Internet access, and YouTube is watched in every home, and in this way, I can change the situation. Because as I was creating the channel, the society had a whole lot of prejudice and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam—though fortunately it is less so today... I created the YouTube channel to share more about my religion and answer questions asked by people who are unfamiliar with the religion. I wanted to do that in as simple a language as possible, without the complicated terminology found in religious texts."

Aryan's videos quickly gained many subscribers – the number today stands at 400,000. Aydan attributes her channel's popularity to two reasons: that few people before her had shared content on this topic in the Russian segment of the Internet, and a keen interest by Russians to learn more about different cultures and religions.

Thanks to her YouTube channel, people of different ages, gender and faith started approaching Aydan on the streets in her home city of Saratov and many others, acknowledging and thanking her for sharing more about her religion. She considers it a most pleasant result of her video blogging. The channel also brought Aydan new opportunities—she started getting invited to various events in other regions. Aryan shares, "I began traveling more. Once, I was invited to host a large international event—the Qur'an Reading Competition in Moscow's Crocus City Hall. I'm still transfixed as I think back—six thousand spectators, and I am the host! I know that the organizers wouldn't have found out about me if not for my YouTube channel."





## 1.3 YouTube helps individuals learn digital skills and get access to international content

**YouTube** is a rich source of entertainment, and is also a channel for people to learn new skills or gain new knowledge. Globally, 77 percent of YouTube users have used the platform to learn a new skill.<sup>38</sup> This showcases how effective the platform has been in providing individuals access to educational content online which teaches them ideas and skills to expand their experiences and abilities. YouTube has also played a part in enabling individuals to learn digital skills, providing them an opportunity to take part in Russia's digital economy. In addition, the platform enables individuals to gain access to international content, and at the same time allows content creators to learn the skills they need to succeed on the platform.

### YOUTUBE HELPS INDIVIDUALS LEARN DIGITAL SKILLS TO IMPROVE THEMSELVES

In Russia, YouTube has also proven to be a popular platform for Russians to learn digital skills, with 42 percent of YouTube users in Russia using the platform for this purpose.<sup>39</sup> These include both basic digital skills, such as using word processing or photo editing software, as well as advanced digital skills, such as software programming and coding. With respect to Russia's creative economy, through a wide range of "how-to" tutorial videos hosted on the platform by content creators, as well as programs organized by Google to upload educational content on it, YouTube is also a platform from which Russian creatives can learn new skills for free.

### YOUTUBE PROVIDES INDIVIDUALS ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL CONTENT

YouTube is also a platform that connects its users to a wide range of content produced by overseas YouTubers, providing them access to international content. In fact, 51 percent of YouTube users in Russia say that they chose YouTube because it gives them access to foreign content.<sup>40</sup> Through the platform, users are able to enjoy a variety of YouTube channels and videos which cover topics and events happening all across the world in the comfort of their own homes and on their devices. Such features showcase how valuable YouTube has been in enabling users in Russia to stay connected and updated on latest events, enriching their lives directly.



38. Wojcicki, S. (2021). "Letter from Susan: Our 2021 Priorities". YouTube Blog. Available at: <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/letter-from-susan-our-2021-priorities/>

39. Based on AlphaBeta survey of Internet users in Russia (2021), n = 513

40. Based on AlphaBeta survey of Internet users in Russia (2021), n = 513

## YOUTUBE IS A PLATFORM FOR CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS TO LEARN CONTENT CREATION SKILLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Content creators also learn a range of professional skills that enable them to maximize the effectiveness of their content on the platform.

YouTube offers a suite of dedicated programs to enable Russia's creative entrepreneurs to develop new skills. For example, Google's YouTube Creator Academy provides a range of free online courses to help content creators build their channel. These courses include content strategy, production, channel optimization, and monetization. NextUp is another initiative by YouTube which provides training and coaching on creating, promoting and monetizing their videos on the platform, and also funding for the purchase of technical production equipment to creators. Content creators in Russia also have access to the YouTube for Creators channel,<sup>41</sup> a dedicated YouTube channel which shares the latest tips and updates that are relevant to the content creator community, to enhance their content creation skills. Described as the "go-to destination for all things 'creator'"<sup>42</sup>, this channel

allows YouTube content creators in Russia to stay updated on the latest YouTube features, trends and tips from experts around the world to keep their subscribers continually engaged.

YouTube also provides support for content creators to learn the skills they need to maximize their income-earning potential from the platform. A key component of this is its YouTube Partner Program, which enables users to monetize their content, increase their subscriber count, and boost their income and revenues from the platform through enhanced access to YouTube resources and YouTube's Creator Support team.<sup>43</sup> Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, globally, the number of new channels that joined the YouTube Partner Program more than doubled in 2020, as compared to 2019<sup>44</sup>, showcasing how YouTube is becoming a platform of choice for content creators.

Box 5 shows an example of a couple who had taken the unconventional step of moving from the city to the countryside, before unexpectedly turning into YouTube sensations. This couple had benefited from learning new content creation skills from YouTube's initiatives, including the NextUp event.

41. YouTube Content Creator Survey in Russia, n = 121

42. YouTube Creators Channel. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrzMlhLpVps>

43. YouTube (2021), YouTube Partner Program overview & eligibility. Available at: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/72851>

44. Wojcicki, S. (2021). "Letter from Susan: Our 2021 Priorities". YouTube Blog. Available at: <https://blog.youtube/inside-youtube/letter-from-susan-our-2021-priorities/>





## Box 5.

**Country Life: From city dwellers turned organic rural farmers and YouTube creative entrepreneurs**

According to a study by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center<sup>45</sup>, over a third (34 percent) of Russians dream of living in the country, and closer to nature. Valentina Kozhokar and Artyom Bik are among those who have implemented this daring plan.

Several years ago, the couple, together with their children, left their busy lives in Moscow to live on an organic farm in the Tver region, a location well known for its natural hills and lakes. With a strong yearning to share their new experiences with relatives and friends, the couple started a YouTube channel, titled Country Life, on which they share video stories about their new lives twice a week. Chronicling their day-to-day activities such as do-it-yourself (DIY) home improvement work and garden landscaping, their YouTube videos capture both the joys and challenges of country living. Backed by the couple's intention to share their lives exactly as they are, these videos are filmed in an authentic manner – there are no screen writing, heavy editing, or complex composition tools deployed as in most professional YouTube videos. This unembellished portrayal of their life in the countryside soon attracted viewers beyond their kin and friends. Within a short period of time, their YouTube channel had amassed thousands of followers who were intrigued by their lifestyle.



Photo source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caGc\\_6UaMuE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=caGc_6UaMuE)

As their channel was gaining popularity, Valentina applied to YouTube NextUp, an annual contest where leading content creators on the platform receive an opportunity to be mentored by “channel coaches”, learn how to boost their subscriber count, and receive vouchers for new video production equipment.<sup>46</sup> Country Life went to become one of the winners, and Valentina and Artyom took part in the YouTube creator camp, which taught them further skills to enhance the reach of their videos. Artyom shares, “We started using professional equipment that YouTube had provided us after the NextUp contest. We are still using it to film our videos.” Valentina also admits in an interview, “Of course, we are learning a lot in the process. The way we used to film and edit the footage in the beginning cannot be compared to what we are doing now.” The new skills learnt by the couple were readily applied to their channel, which currently has a subscriber count of 200,000. Country Living has also brought about a good source of income for the couple, who earn money from their content and regularly work with advertising partners.

Despite the success of Country Living, the couple sees their interaction with the platform as a two-way street. They believe that they have gained much of the skills and support they needed to survive and flourish in the countryside from watching other YouTube videos, and from communicating with their viewers. “We looked up construction, animals, gardening—basically everything—and by the way, we learned a lot from YouTube videos,” says Valentina. “Moreover, our audience gives us advice on how to make everything better. Our viewers are mostly adults, people with experience who have their reasons not to live in the country but miss the rural life. They know well how to manage a farm, how to build, how to make a vegetable patch and so on. They are very empathetic and supportive.”

Though initially created for friends and family, Country Life has become one of the most viewed channels of the genre in Russia. It reflects YouTube as a platform that is agnostic to geography: whether one lives in a large city or in the countryside, it can bring visibility to content creators from anywhere.

45. VICOM News (2019), “Wanderlust: Why and why?” Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/okhota-k-peremene-mest-zachem-i-pochemu>

46. YouTube NextUp. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/nextup/>

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