

Digital Interactions and Audience Dynamics:

Analyzing YouTube's Role in Indonesian Performance Arts

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Abstract

This study draws on the framework of mediatization to analyze how YouTube, as a digital entity, facilitates and transforms audience relations and participation in performances. It employs a literature review to explore the intricate dynamics of audience interaction and performative presence on YouTube within the Indonesian context. The findings from engagement metrics powerfully suggest interaction that exceeds traditional audience participation, signaling a shift towards more immersive and interactive consumption of performance arts. The results underline a shift in audience roles from passive receivers to active participants empowered by the mediatization process with YouTube. This transformation strongly impacts cultural production as more artists cater to content that reaches their digital audience. Digital platforms, including YouTube, can reshape cultural norms and performance practices, especially within the panorama of global and local cultural dynamics.

Keywords: *Audience Engagement, Digital Mediatization, Indonesian Cultural Practices, Interactive Consumption, Youtube Performance Arts*

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Introduction

Departing from the Covid-19 pandemic, which also impacted the arts (Bennett, 2020; Simou, 2022), exploration of new modes continue to be explored until now. Both performing and visual arts, from a performing and study point of view, continue to improvise, innovate, and create to provide new experiences. Even though it happened (in Indonesia) in March 2020, Steve Dixon's statement that art, science, and technology are undergoing a period of significant change is a reminder that in the future digital technology will be an essential point (2007).

Digital technology comes with challenges. It will be an impressive, effective, and efficient mode and vice versa. It can be a tool, media, or even an entity with a power relationship. For the arts, the explosive challenges to the institutions and practices of engineering, art-making, and art-scientific research raise questions about the ethics, methods, and care for the "entity of art" within them. Furthermore, explosiveness which (likely) takes the form of unexpected beauty and understanding, is an opportunity and an unexpected risk and threat. The new global connectivity creates new arenas for interaction between science, art, and technology but also creates preconditions for the challenges of art going forward (Wilson, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic and the leap in digital technology required much adaptation from the artist and audience because many cultural events and performances were canceled, postponed, or readjusted worldwide (Iacobute, 2020). On the other hand, the presence of digital platforms such as YouTube is considered very helpful for the continuation of the show. It is increasingly developing as a virtual information center. Furthermore, YouTube features links to other platforms that are identical to the typical sharing characteristics of social media. YouTube is considered an ideal place to collect information not only about its creators (or, in the context of this study, performance), about its users, the shows they are interested in, and how they use the shows as this information.

Thus, YouTube has become a social media site (with the ability to like, comment, and share) focused solely on video content. Due to its focused approach, users can concentrate on their chosen topics (Waldron, 2013). According to Alexa.com, YouTube has been the world's second most popular site since October 2007 (Borghol et al., 2012). One factor contributing to this is YouTube's ability to "learn" what users want, including in shows-related searches. YouTube is constantly improving its query software to ensure that it returns at least 90% correct matches to search criteria (Waldron, 2013). This, in turn, makes the site a "valuable source of information" about its users and the genres they choose to offer.

On the other hand, creators are incentivized to create popular content, as the high number of views translates into a financial contribution where creators can receive a portion of the advertising revenue related to the content they post (Khan, 2017). In the YouTube ecosystem, performative presence or presence, especially from the audience's point of view, is one of the keys to the show's uniqueness, as stated by Cormac Power (2008). The performative

presence that feels different in the pandemic era and how its opportunities for intermedia exploration carried out by performing artists should also give new meaning to processing in the post-pandemic era of art, especially on the YouTube platform as a media for interaction between digital creators and audiences.

This research is to see the tendency of previous research regarding the interactive exploratory construction of YouTube creators and viewers in participatory spaces by looking at how researchers exploring virtual audience experiences are responded to creative and collaborative performance. This is considered necessary because there has yet to be a study on YouTube viewer-creator relationships and their interactions. By trying to depart from the problems being discussed and looking at the opportunities going forward, namely how interactions occur between viewers and show creators on the YouTube platform. Furthermore, what is the role of YouTube creators utilizing the features and experiences of participatory space that are played from the point of view of YouTube virtual show viewers? This research plays on the threshold between the fields of art and technology (even digital psychology opportunities) to provide recommendations on opportunities that can be explored and to enrich the variety of virtual performance models and the role of audience presence as a performance complexity. Even though there is still debate about shows in this pandemic era, YouTube creators still have to work and innovate. Only by continuing to produce and produce works of art are creators able to adapt and meet the challenge of maintaining or changing the way of performing, even if they have to change media; for an undetermined amount of time. Therefore, this research can be a medium for exploring the typicality of audience experience when exploring presence in the participatory space provided by creators.

Deciphering the experience of the audience's presence in a participatory space is needed to see the intermedia opportunities that the audience does when searching for virtual performances. The exploration of intermedia that makes the show present and responds with interaction by the audience requires a specific adaptation. On the other hand, the perspective that was typical at the beginning of a pandemic that audiences might be able to present performances via gadgets easily must be updated immediately so that YouTube creators try to continue presenting a participatory performance experience even though not through conventional stages, but with intermedia exploration as well. Intermedia audiences respond and respond to intermedia performing artists.

Some Were Close and Some Were Not to the Loss of the "Audience" in Performing Arts Research

Research on audiences (both in terms of audience and spectators) is rare, especially when linking the word screen/virtual/online. If found, then the focus is to see the audience's response to the show and have not seen the opportunity for audience studies to open up opportunities that can be extracted as a performance artist's formulation in creating tools or providing digital effects for performances that are treated as unique (Figure 1). On the other hand, inter-media is linked to providing some extra steps when a performance invites the audience to be interactively present in it without ever having to consider the properties previously considered (Iacobute, 2020; Rosas, 2019; Starner, 2020; Y et al., 2023).



Figure 1. The trends of audience research and digital intermediation.

The scarcity of audience research in digital performing arts settings holds innovation potential, especially in how audiences can actively participate in creating digital tools and effects, thus transitioning from passive observers to active contributors (Figure 1) (Liedke, 2021; Radbourne, Glow, and Johanson, 2013). The use of big data and algorithms is revolutionizing how audiences are segmented. However, there remains a need for more focused studies on individual behaviors and preferences to enhance personalized engagement strategies. Moreover, platforms like YouTube are transforming viewing habits and blurring the distinctions between online and offline audience engagement, simultaneously opening new economic avenues for artists. Despite the opportunities presented by digital advancements post-pandemic, challenges persist, particularly in maintaining artistic integrity and managing audience expectations in virtual domains. This digital transformation underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research integrating technology, social sciences, and arts to fully grasp and harness the complexities of digital audience engagement in ensuring the future vibrancy of the arts.

Studies regarding audiences are tied to how they interact with big data, especially considering how these big data algorithms influence the concept of audiences and, more generally, in imagining collectives in the digital age. According to Bauman and Lyon's research, big data with its algorithm is the primary method for estimating "customs," which also contributes to the economy. That is, there is a relationship between the algorithm and the audience that mutually negotiates for mutual influence. The algorithm classifies the raw population into segments so that producers – performing artists – can treat the audience differently based on the behavior or artistic segmentation of the audience as consumers (Bauman and Lyon, 2013). Unfortunately, previous research on audiences has not focused on individual-focused studies or predictive techniques or imagining what viewers will do while enjoying virtual shows on YouTube (Balleys et al., 2020; Botha, 2015; Holton, Lewis, and Coddington, 2016; Scott, 2022; Starnier, 2020; Vultee, 2015). Therefore, this research tries to include the audience-algorithm-artist preference relationship. Furthermore, for its participative role in the creative performance of artists, as an archive and knowledge space, as well as the imagination that it collects through historiography, which is stored in the personalization of each viewer's account.

Other research on virtual viewers often underscores that digital categories of algorithms create identities that are unrelated to the personalization of real-life viewers: age, gender, preferences, or habits are redefined based on a person's online behavior (Barlow et al., 2020; Holton, Lewis, and Coddington, 2016; Liedke, 2021; Loosen and Schmidt, 2012). Hence, Cheney-Lippold (2017, 10) uses quotation marks to distinguish between “online categories” and “offline categories” where “online categories” are characterized by their fluid patterns. As Cheney-Lippold said, the preferences of users or viewers of music videos on YouTube of the same gender (e.g., male) can change (to female) if the algorithm shows that he likes to access music videos that tend to be female. In other studies (Amodu et al., 2020; Beuscart, Coavoux, and Garroq, 2022), this point is confirmed by YouTube performance artists who emphasize the importance of novelty to “new viewers” (or new users) as a point of the latest data to reach them as new consumers who are most receptive to YouTube-suggested music content for the first time (Ciotti, 2014).

Previous research on YouTube shows viewers do not define “newness” as a change in acceptance of existing viewers (or users) compared to new viewers (or users) (Bärtl, 2018; Creator Insider, 2021; Longhurst, 2009) whose goal is to capture behavior while the real thing if studied by YouTube performance artists can be a basis for their creative behavior. Therefore, research on pre-imagined digital audiences builds on audiences as digital subjects (Goriunova, 2019), as they are formed computationally from data, models, and various other analytical algorithms.

Studies that deal with the technical settings involved in algorithmic outcomes tend to be too complex to convey to audiences (Pan, 2021). Therefore, preliminary studies on recommendations for algorithm results can be carried out by taking the form of systematic small-scale observations or more robust strategies. At least, this technique can bring up editorial criteria, which has been shown in research on auto-completion in Google searches (Google search engine features) (Diakopoulos, 2015). However, in large-scale system complexity, where (probabilistic) algorithms intersect with many other possible variables, it is difficult to dismantle the operating principle unambiguously, and engineering techniques will almost certainly miss hard-to-reproduce inputs such as random preference data. Keeping these limitations, a scraping method is used and observing what an algorithm does to investigate the broader shape of the agencies/agencies/creators/agencies involved.

Previous research has not tried to reveal the relationship between individual viewers and YouTube performance artists, but they play in virtual space and are structured in the context of a digital universe (Cheney-Lippold, 2017; Sui, Sui, and Rhodes, 2022; Wilson, 2020). Even in the view of Cheney-Lippold (2017), algorithms create categories such that in the early exploration of the early uses of virtual reality (virtual reality or later written VR), artists and digital media technologists have recognized VR as a medium of inherent performance: Virtual reality is all about illusions. It is about computer graphics in the theater of the mind. It is about using technology to convince yourself that you are in another reality. Virtual reality is where the computer disappears, and you become the ghost in the machine; the computer retreats behind the scenes and becomes invisible (Pimentel and Teixeira, 1993).

Performances (even mainstream ones) have the unique quality of engendering the creation of imaginary worlds where the viewer is invited to embark on a dream-like experience that transcends daily (Pearlman, 2015). Furthermore, the experience of presence occurs at the right moment when someone enters the stage with an emotional tendency to be part of an artistic and aesthetic experience (Naukkarinen and Bragge, 2016; Pearlman, 2015). In this sense, there is a mutual agreement on the symbolic nature of the show as a medium for creating its world, and VR is tasked with extending the experience of the show to new dimensions. Thus, VR or tele/cyber-performance media can be seen as a media, tool, and creative space to enhance essential aspects of imaginary world experience, transformative space, and audience immersion regarding the blurring of boundaries between the natural world and the simulated world (Dixon, 2007; Unger, 2015).

Combining performing arts with digital technology is not new but a continuously developing phenomenon. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, the search shows that intermedia collaboration with performance has not emerged from the recent development of so-called immersive media technologies (Baía Reis and Ashmore, 2022). Throughout the 1990s, even society could find groundbreaking examples of leveraging VR and other related technologies to explore performance innovatively (Makrzanowska, 2020). Despite its innovative nature, the experience of the world of simulation in performance is essentially an inter-media exploration of participatory installation art, which is accessible to a small number of people (though still in the prototype stage). However, intermedia performances in the type of digital performances provide a reciprocity that provides space for artists and audiences from around the world to participate in transnational digital performances that utilize technology, interactive computer platforms, and participatory applications (Dunne-Howrie, 2022; Hunter, 2019).

The intersection of performance, technology, and the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 created a unique phenomenon to be studied by many parties. Theater artist Elyandra Widharta stated that artists try to actualize themselves by using their devices and digital media as training intermediaries (2021). Mukim artists at Theater Satu, Lampung, did the same thing. Instead of using it as a place for rehearsals and performances, the YouTube channel is used to disseminate knowledge about theater to a broader audience (Pratama, 2022). This becomes one of the aspects that make it easier for the theater community to access theater references that are generally scattered in an area (Kiminami and Duggan, 2022). Online platforms (digital platforms) such as live streams and other digital mediations help performing artists and audiences apply the interconnectedness of performances more broadly.

Theater academic, Rustom Bharucha (2021), questioned whether performing online is a new form of theater or simply an attempt to adapt to a new presentation medium. The search for new forms of performance cannot be separated from the interaction of artists and works with new spaces -- in this case, online media becomes that space, and the audience is the entity that is present in it (Walmsley, 2019). Theater that is presented to our private spaces through gadgets still presents things according to basic theater principles: there are elements of creative work (by actors, directors, crew, and other elements), and

there is a contingency and various forms of representation. In the end, Bharucha argued that, during the Coronavirus pandemic, the theater did not change its form but how it was presented (2020).

In line with Bharucha, Meyer-Dinkgrafe (2011) said that changing the way of presenting or mediating performances is a form of co-presence. Technology is not a threat to theatre's existence, but it should be a trigger for artists to be aware of the times, even though they want to maintain their form (Meyer-Dinkgräfe, 2011). Even though there is a difference between the experience of live and virtual performances in the context of creation, the change in rides cannot be a consideration of whether a performance is good or not. On the other hand, the argument about diversion has not been balanced with how the audience has a significant opportunity to participate in the show. Virtual performances provide a simplistic value that seems to ignore the basis of performance as something that departs from communal rituals that are experienced directly. It will not become permanent because the change of vehicle is only to maintain the show's survival and its creators (Caldeira, Van Bauwel, and Ridder, 2018; Stepien, 2021; Acquaye, Sawyerr, and Seidu, 2023). The opportunity for the audience is vast in determining the existence of the show, and its use can change the creation process, considering that creators will focus on attracting the attention of the digital public.

In cyber shows, the relationships between the elements that play in them are redefined. Spectators in cyber-performance are internet users who can improvise and become participatory spectators in performances (Reynolds, 2019). So, the question is about the shift in the relationship between performing artists (YouTube creators) and audiences; and proposes audience responses to reflect the development and metamorphosis of the audience's role in the emerging digital performance environment. Shows find new platforms in the virtual world when they intersect with the internet. So that the term digital performance, screen performance, tele-performance, cyber-performance, YouTube performance, and the like emerged to provide their respective distinctions.

Main Category	Subcategories
Audience Research	Rare studies; focus on digital media response; audience as tool creators
Inter-media	Extra steps in digital engagement
Big Data and Algorithms	Influence on audience categorization; lack of individual-focused studies
Virtual Reality and Performance	VR as a performance medium; creation of imaginary worlds
Digital Performance	Transformation of viewing habits; online and offline categories
Economic and Social Impact	New revenue streams; community and engagement in digital spaces
Future of Digital Performances	Potential permanence post-pandemic; innovations in immersive media technologies

Figure 2. Overview table of research areas in audience engagement and digital intermediation in performing arts.

The research described above has yet to position the audience as the main subject for using technology and its intermediation regarding virtual performances (Figure 2's table). Furthermore, the experience underlying and utilized through virtual-based performances has never been done. From mapping research positions among similar studies above, the originality of the research can be maintained and accounted for.

Mediatization of Music Performances and Cultural Dynamics on YouTube

The phenomenon of mediatization in the performing arts, especially regarding how music performances are experienced through platforms like YouTube, presents multiple multi-perspectives where digital media reshape cultural consumption and artistic production. Mediatization refers to how media becomes integral to societal operations, influencing and transforming communication, culture, and social institutions (Lian, 2023). The transition to digital platforms, particularly YouTube, as a medium for viewing and engaging with music performances exemplifies this transformation in performing arts.

Historically, the performing arts have been an ephemeral experience, largely dependent on physical presence. However, the beginning of YouTube and similar platforms have dramatically altered this dynamic by democratizing access to performances and enabling artists to reach a global audience irrespective of geographical and economic barriers (Marin, Barra, and Moyano, 2022). For instance, small-time musicians or indie bands who previously had limited exposure can now showcase their talent to a vast audience, challenging traditional gatekeepers like record labels and concert promoters. Such platforms do not merely serve as tools for distribution but actively shape the cultural production itself (Svasek, 2012; Kiminami and Duggan, 2022). Artists are increasingly creating content with a digital-first approach, tailoring their performances to cater to online audiences (Unger, 2015). This includes shorter songs, visually engaging content, and interactive elements like live streaming or audience engagement through comments. These adaptations reflect an intrinsic understanding of the YouTube algorithm and its preference for engagement-driven metrics directly influencing creative decisions (Cheney-Lippold, 2017).

From a data perspective, YouTube's statistics reveal a significant impact. According to a report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), 46% of global music consumers use YouTube, and 47% of on-demand music streaming is attributed to video streams (Beuscart, Coavoux, and Garroq, 2022). This indicates the popularity of YouTube as a platform for music consumption and highlights its role in the current music ecosystem. Furthermore, YouTube's monetization policies, including ad revenue sharing and the YouTube Partner Program, have become vital income sources for many artists, further embedding the platform into the economic foundations of the music industry.

The cultural implications of this transformation are profound because mediatization through YouTube has facilitated a more participatory culture where fans are not just passive consumers but active participants. They create and share user-generated content, engage in dialogues with artists, and form communities around shared musical interests. This engagement level redefines what it means to be a fan and a performer, blurring the lines between producer and consumer. Simultaneously, the global reach of YouTube challenges

and disrupts traditional notions of cultural hegemony (Beal, 2022). Diverse music forms, including non-Western genres, find a YouTube platform promoting a more inclusive global music culture. This is evident in the rise of K-pop on global charts, propelled mainly by its solid visual components and strategic use of YouTube for global outreach.

Moreover, the mediatization of music performances on YouTube has scholarly implications. It serves as a rich site for examining contemporary cultural trends, identity construction, and the interplay of global and local cultures (Figure 3). Researchers utilize YouTube as a data source by analyzing everything from comments and video metrics to visual and musical trends to gain insights into cultural dynamics in the digital age. However, the reliance on YouTube has raised concerns about algorithmic bias, where certain types of content are favoured over others, potentially marginalizing less mainstream voices. There are also issues related to copyright disputes and the precarious nature of relying on digital platforms for economic sustainability.



Figure 3. The relationship of mediatization through digital platform.

The mediatization of the performing arts through digital platforms like YouTube has profoundly transformed the landscape of cultural consumption, artistic production, and the dynamics of engagement (Figure 3). Artists are increasingly adopting a digital-first approach, tailoring performances to resonate with online audiences and the unique dynamics of digital consumption (Liikkanen and Salovaara, 2015). YouTube, in particular, has become a pivotal platform for music streaming and engagement, influencing artistic decisions through engagement-driven metrics dictated by its algorithms (Durand, 2023). Its change from traditional live performances to digital formats reflects a significant evolution in consumption and production models within the arts, with YouTube's revenue-sharing model emerging as a critical income source for artists, laying new economic foundations globally.

This transformation fosters a participatory culture by blurring the traditional roles between fans and artists and redefining what constitutes a musical or performance experience. Non-Western music genres leverage YouTube for global reach, impacting cultural trends, identity construction, and the dynamics between global and local cultures. Issues such as algorithmic bias and copyright disputes underscore the precariousness of dependen-

dency on platform-specific revenue models. As artists modify their creative processes to suit digital platforms, questions about artistic authenticity and the economic impact of such adaptations arise (Botella et al., 2013). The mediatization of music performances through YouTube represents a paradigm shift in how music is consumed and produced. It has democratized access to the performing arts, facilitated new forms of cultural expression, and reshaped the economic landscape of the music industry. As both a medium and a message, YouTube is a pivotal element in the ongoing evolution of the performing arts, reflecting broader societal transformations in the digital age.

Audience Response and Interaction as a Form of Presence in the Participatory Space

As a digital platform, YouTube has transformed the traditional paradigms of audience interaction in performing arts. These platforms have catalyzed a shift from passive spectatorship to active participation, fundamentally redefining the concept of audience presence in the digital age. This transformation is particularly evident in how performing artists, now doubling as YouTube creators, engage with their audiences, turning the viewing experience into an interactive, participatory event. YouTube engages viewers with content beyond mere consumption as a participatory media platform (Beuscart, Coavoux, and Garrocq, 2022). Audience members are not just passive recipients but active participants who can influence the content's creation, dissemination, and reception through likes, comments, shares, and crowdfunding (Kim, 2012). This interaction stimulates a sense of community and shared experience that transcends physical boundaries, creating what could be termed a "virtual presence."

The concept of virtual presence is critical in understanding the new forms of engagement facilitated by YouTube. This presence is characterized by immediacy and intimacy traditionally reserved for live performances. YouTube has allowed artists to create personal spaces online where fans can interact as if in a continuous dialogue. Fans respond to videos with their content, participate in challenges initiated by creators, and engage in lengthy discussions in the comment sections. It can contribute to a sustained engagement that enhances the relational dynamic between the artist and the audience. Data from YouTube analytics reveal the extent of this interaction (Bärtl, 2018). For instance, popular music channels often report high engagement rates that are not merely measured by views but by active participation metrics such as average comment count and likes per video (Khan, 2017). These metrics often exceed those of traditional media platforms, indicating higher audience involvement (YouTube Creator Academy, 2020). Moreover, real-time interaction features like YouTube Live adds another layer of engagement, where audiences can interact with performers during live performances, diminishing the gap between the audience and the performer.

The implications of this transformation are profound both for the audience and the performers. For the audience, the interactive capabilities of YouTube provide a sense of agency and belonging (Hemsley et al., 2015). They are not only watching a performance but are part of the performance narrative, influencing its flow and outcome through their interactions. This participatory culture fosters a deeper emotional connection with the content and creates a community around shared interests and collective experiences. For performers, this new model offers opportunities and challenges. It allows for greater creative freedom and direct fan interaction, enhancing their artistic expression and audience loyalty.

Performers can receive immediate feedback on their work, adjust their artistic output to audience preferences, and experiment with new forms of content without the traditional risks associated with live performance. Then, this model demands high engagement and responsiveness to audience expectations, which can be time-consuming and creatively constraining.

Furthermore, the economic implications of this shift are significant. Audience interactions on YouTube boost visibility through algorithmic promotion and translate into direct economic benefits via ad revenues, sponsorships, and fan donations through platforms like "Patreon" (Kim, 2012). This economic model, heavily reliant on audience engagement, underlines the importance of interactive presence as a critical factor in the financial sustainability of artists on digital platforms. Critically, the mediatization of audience interaction raises questions about the authenticity of digital interactions and the potential commodification of community. Digital platforms offer new spaces for interaction, they also risk transforming genuine community interactions into market transactions, where engagement metrics become proxies for community health (Chountasi, Dafiotis, and Sylaiou, 2021).

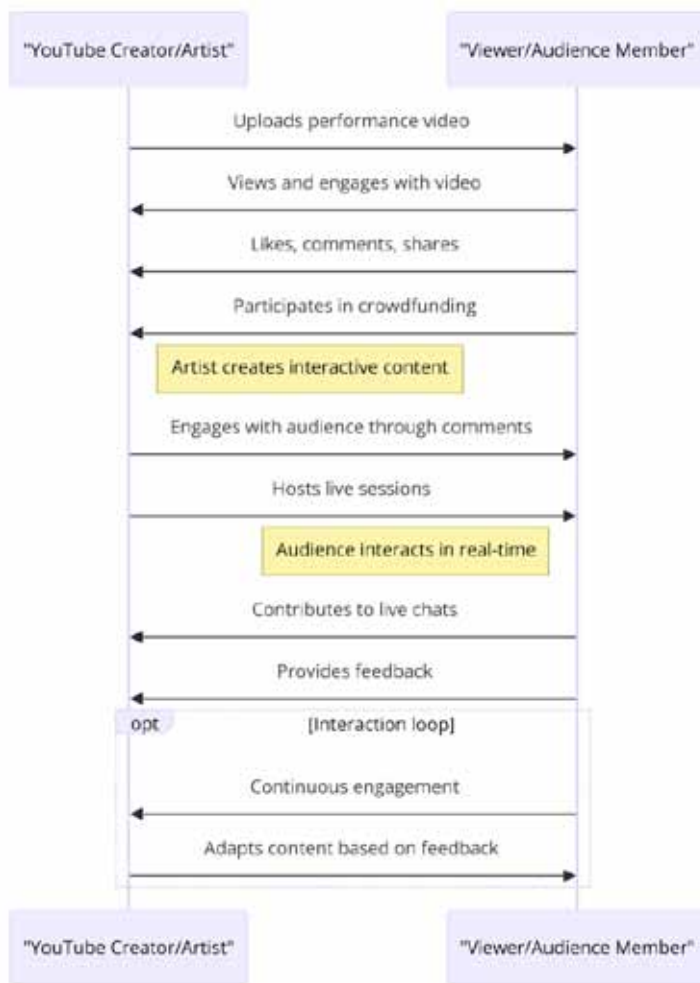


Figure 4. The dynamic interactions between performing artist and their audience.

The sequence diagram illustrating the interactions between performing artists and their audiences on YouTube offers a compelling depiction of how digital platforms have transformed traditional artist-audience dynamics (Figure 4). At the start of this sequence, a performer uploads a video to YouTube, setting off a multifaceted engagement process that underscores a shift from passive spectatorship to a more dynamic, participatory role for the audience. Viewers engage with the content not only by liking, commenting, and sharing, which are critical actions that influence the video's visibility through YouTube's algorithm but also by participating in crowdfunding efforts to support the artist directly.

A crucial element in this interaction is the content creation feedback loop, where audiences provide real-time feedback through comments and live chats during streaming sessions (Figure 3). This feedback informs the artist's future content, thus creating a continuous cycle of adaptation and response. It also shows the importance of live sessions that facilitate real-time interactions and enhance the immediacy and intimacy of engagement between the artist and the audience.

The strategic transformation necessary for artists to create interactive content is noted in the diagram (Figure 4), reflecting the need for artists to adapt their strategies to engage effectively with digital audiences. This promotes a collaborative and interactive connection where audiences transition from mere spectators to co-creators of the artistic experience. While this model offers increased engagement and the opportunity for direct and immediate feedback, it also poses significant challenges for artists, demanding constant adaptation of content and careful management of viewer expectations. Moreover, these interactions carry direct economic implications through ad revenues and crowdfunding, highlighting the significant economic stakes. Encapsulates the dynamic and reciprocal nature of artist-audience interactions on digital platforms like YouTube, emphasizing the profound opportunities and complex challenges that define the modern digital performance landscape.

The transformation of audience interaction in the digital culture, as exemplified by YouTube, represents a significant shift in the performing arts landscape. It challenges traditional notions of presence, participation, and performance into new opportunities for creativity and engagement while posing authenticity and economic dependency challenges. As this digital interaction landscape continues to evolve, it will undoubtedly continue to profoundly shape the cultural and economic dynamics of performing arts.

Intermediation and Virtual Performance Post-Pandemic

Intermediation, the process by which digital tools and platforms mediate user interactions, has been integral in shaping experiences, behaviors, communications, and social interactions in the virtual performance space, especially post-pandemic (Naafs and White, 2012). This dynamic is evident in how digital platforms, notably in the performing arts, have compensated for the absence of physical venues and crafted new forms of cultural and social engagements that could endure beyond the pandemic's immediate impacts. One significant aspect of this intermediation is the alteration of audience experience. Virtual performances can transcend geographical boundaries and eliminate physical constraints, allowing global audiences to participate in cultural events from their homes (Cayari, 2018). This accessibility broadens the demographic reach of performances, as observed during the

Metropolitan Opera's nightly streams, which reportedly attracted an audience much larger and more diverse than its regular live performances (Metropolitan Opera, 2020). The behavior of audiences in virtual settings contrasts with that of traditional venues. Online, viewers can interact with the performers through live chats and with each other, creating a layered communication dynamic typically absent in conventional performances (Bode, 2021). This interaction often extends beyond the performance into digital forums and social media, where discussions and fan activities foster a sense of community and ongoing engagement.

Intermediation also reshapes communication by embedding additional layers of interaction through multimedia elements (Swords, 2020). For example, performances include on-screen captions, integrated social media feeds, or interactive polls, which enhance the communicative richness of the event. These elements make the performance more accessible and inclusive. It transforms the viewer's role from a passive observer to an active participant. This transformation is supported by data from a Pew Research Center survey (Zylinski, Davis, and Vladica, 2024), which found that internet users increased their participation in online classes and streaming performances during the pandemic, with many respondents continuing these activities, suggesting a lasting change in consumer behavior. The social interactions facilitated by these virtual platforms also contribute to creating new social norms and etiquette (Ceh and Benedek, 2021). In virtual theatres, for instance, audience reactions can be immediate and visible through emojis or comments, creating a new type of etiquette where direct feedback becomes part of the performance. This immediacy can enhance the connection between the audience and the performers, as well as among the audience members.

From a technical perspective, the intermediation offered by digital platforms involves sophisticated algorithms that curate and recommend content based on user behaviour, further influencing the cultural consumption landscape (Young, 2017). These algorithms help create personalized experiences, promoting a deeper engagement with the arts and potentially increasing cultural literacy across a diverse audience spectrum. Economically, the shift to virtual performances has opened new revenue streams for artists and cultural institutions (Gomis-Porqueras and Rodrigues-Neto, 2018). While traditional ticket sales might have dwindled, monetization through digital subscriptions, pay-per-view models, and enhanced sponsorship opportunities have begun to fill the gap. Additionally, digital performances can reduce operational costs related to physical venues, allowing for a redistribution of resources towards creative outputs.

The below diagram highlights the enduring impacts of these changes on cultural and social engagements (Figure 5). Virtual platforms have introduced new forms of cultural participation that may persist beyond the pandemic, facilitated by algorithms that curate content and potentially increase cultural literacy among diverse audiences. However, this transformation is complete of challenges. Issues such as maintaining authenticity in community interactions and establishing new norms of digital etiquette are critical considerations. The diagram underscores the evolving roles of audiences from passive spectators to active participants and reflects on the profound economic and cultural shifts that digital intermediation has prompted.



Figure 3. The impact of intermediation in virtual performances.

The role of intermediation in linking experiences, behaviours, communications, and social interactions in virtual performances post-pandemic represents a profound shift in the performing arts landscape. As these platforms continue to evolve, they compensate for the loss of physical interaction and create enriched, accessible, and inclusive cultural experiences. This transformation, supported by both technological advancement and cultural adaptation, suggests that the rise of virtual performances could be a permanent fixture in the cultural consumption habits of global audiences, shaping the future of the performing arts in the digital era.

"Presence:" An Approach to Audience Studies

Giannachi has conveyed an approach to virtual performances with the definition of a form of performance that is re-mediated and performance that emphasizes the involvement of the digital medium in the performance (Giannachi, 2004). Virtual performances, primarily through YouTube, are inclusive because they provide space for artists (creators) to use various media to present or display their work. Furthermore, virtual performance has keywords related to intertextual, metatextual, intermedial, and meta-media forms of performance. These keywords reflect that they cannot stand from just one type of text or form; so does the type of media involved in the show. Virtual performances provide space for existence and non-existence at the same time. This makes virtual performances challenging to reproduce because the medium is often intangible or abstract, which makes virtual performances volatile. Therefore, the interaction between viewers and creators is needed to make YouTube a participatory space that can "extend" virtual shows that are re-mediated and how shows that are held have a unique effect on the memory of the audience involved.

Virtual performances become a meeting place for reality and virtuality, termed hypersurface (Jaller and Serafin, 2020; Sermon et al., 2022). Hypersurface is a vehicle for meeting materiality, textuality, and what is the material with its representation (Fu and Shumate, 2017). The audience can be part of the show directly, even though the nature of the show is not to live, but this show simulates immersiveness. Furthermore, through a hypersurface, the real and the virtual can coexist because a hypersurface offers a variety of perspectives. In the YouTube feature, hypersurface becomes the initial trigger for other virtual shows recommended through the algorithms that play in it.

Related to how participatory space is in a hypersurface, Jamieson uses the term to de-

fine live performance practices that utilize internet technology to unite remote players in real-time for remote audiences (Jamieson, 2008). The boundaries between terms describing digital performance (performance) are still blurred so that they can be used interchangeably in many cases. This is because the audience and performing artists meet virtually and have time to communicate, which is located in a simulated (YouTube) world, and thus the conventional stage is replaced by a simulated (virtual) world stage; because of its online interactive nature; and finally virtual performances are a "digital" thing.

Digital issues often simplified as "shows that can be watched at any time," are interesting. On the one hand, it allows the audience to make arrangements for their presence in a performance, and the audience invites them to attend the performance. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity to ignore liveness issues that have the potential to reduce its performative power. The audience needs to be present, like Cormac Power's statement in his book *Presence in Play* about presence, which is defined as simultaneously being in a space and time (Power, 2008). However, the term "presence" is also interesting when reading about YouTube virtual performances. The audience is present when they interact with the YouTube performance video they are viewing because it triggers the unconscious into a conscious form of experience. So, presence is a concept of awareness and attention to an object simultaneously appearing together.

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