



RESEARCH PAPER

**Introduction, Growth and Future of Vlogging in Pakistan: An
Exploratory Study**

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In recent years, communication patterns and tools have been revolutionized globally due to the technological advancements e.g. social networking websites, streaming services, live calling applications etc. Among these mediums, vlogging has been recognized as an influential and leading communication pattern. Vlogging has become an exploding passion among internet communities since its emergence in 2000. In contrast to that, it is rather a new phenomenon in Pakistan which needs to be explored. Therefore, present study aims to explore the introduction, growth and future of vlogging in Pakistan. The study implied in-depth interviews from 10 influential Pakistani vloggers who have secured a decent number of followers and viewers on their respective channels including 5 beauty and lifestyle vloggers, 3 travel vloggers and 2 food vloggers. Findings revealed that vlogging is a modern experience and it is getting popular among Pakistani masses. Hence, professional and immature all kind of people are vlogging these days. It does not only give masses freedom of sharing their and skills and thoughts with world but also has become a major source of income. Present study will not only be helpful in academic and professional fields; it is presumed to be a stepping stone in the research on vlogging at national level and can lead to further research on effects of vlogging and content analysis of Pakistani vlogs.

Introduction

As the technological advancements have eased every sphere of life, communication patterns have also altered globally. Sheoran (2012) stated "Advancement in the field of communication has made remarkable improvement, starting from the symbol style of communication to the latest digital mobile equipments and computers. Communication itself has not changed, rather the

means, which we use to communicate have changed". There has been a shift from traditional media to digital media within a period and now digital media is empowering every individual with its quick access and a place to show the world about their existence (Couldry, 2012). Vlogging is one contemporary forms of interactive communication. As defined by Cambridge Dictionary, vlogging is an act of recording thoughts, experiences or opinions on camera, and then publishing it on the internet. Vlogs are a new genre in computer-mediated communication (CMC), with their contents being similar to those of blogs, except they are rendered through videos (Frobenius, 2009; Snelson, 2015). A distinctive feature of vlogs is that their creators, called *vloggers*, appear physically in their media text and express themselves verbally. One of the most important aspects of vlogging is to generate a visual connection with your viewers. Vlogs have brought about a new revolution in multimedia usage.

Vlogs have existed since January 2nd, 2000 when Adam Kontras posted his first 15 seconds video of his journey to Los Angeles to his personal blog for friends and family to follow along in his journey (Dan Sanchez , 2019). Nonetheless, not until 2005 vlogging contacted the statures of ubiquity. It was all because of the underlying dispatch of YouTube - A video posting and sharing motor. YouTube is one the greatest streaming service which has given boost to vlogging around the world. Since the start of YouTube in 2005, YouTube has permitted customers to convey video content. Many have exploited the stage by developing enormous followings and turning out to be real YouTube VIPs. Not only YouTube, many other streaming services i.e., Facebook Live, Instagram are also facilitating vloggers to produce vlogs.

Talking about Pakistan, according to Data Reportal (Digital 2020: Pakistan 2020), there were 76.38 million internet users in Pakistan in January 2020. The number of internet users in Pakistan increased by 11 million (+17%) between 2019 and 2020. Internet penetration in Pakistan stood at 35% in January 2020. Similarly, there were 37.00 million social media users in Pakistan in January 2020. The number of social media users in Pakistan increased by 2.4 million (+7.0%) between April 2019 and January 2020. Social media penetration in Pakistan stood at 17% in January 2020. These figures indicate that people in Pakistan are well aware of the use of technology and they are getting familiar with the interactive use of social media as well.

Among all social media platforms available in Pakistan to date, Facebook has the greatest penetration (80.98%) as compared to YouTube which has only 1.11. Since the launch of YouTube in 2005, many people are getting the benefits of YouTube globally by creating their own channels and sharing their skills, capabilities with the world. Pakistan's YouTube consumption is far less as compared to the rest of the world. Even India's YouTube consumption is higher than Pakistan i.e., 6.85 (StatsCounter, 2019). This shows that even with the availability and accessibility of YouTube, it's not been beneficial as it has to be for our country. As YouTube's trademark explains One can now "*communicate yourself*" (Garfield, 2006), many people are creating their own YouTube channels which is giving boost to vlogging. YouTube can be considered the latest television for kids. With their charismatic

appearances, some Pakistani YouTube Vloggers are affecting Pakistani youth to a large extent.

There is no evidence available in the literature to explore when vlogging was formally introduced in Pakistan. It was not a popular medium until 2016. People started practical usage of YouTube and vlogging started with many new faces who brought innovative ideas and spread them through their channels on YouTube. Since then many people are coming into vlogging and getting benefits of this. Currently, a food channel owned by a Lahore based vlogger Amna; is the most popular channel of Pakistan which has 4.04 million subscribers. The channel was started in 2016 and in the span of five years; its popularity has crossed all borders. Another interesting fact was observed that the number of videos produced doesn't make a vlogger popular but the content does. Many vloggers have millions of subscribers with just a few numbers of videos on their channel.

Vlogging is an important phenomenon which has altered the media dimension around the globe. The system of media has changed in the postmodern world. The shift from professional-made entertainment into more of a part-time created content is clearly observable in the today's era of social media and platforms such as YouTube (Serrano Puche, 2017). People these days are reliant on social media sites. Hi-tech progression has not only improved the lifestyle of people in developed countries but developing countries are also getting advantages out of them. One of the most important aspects of vlogging is to create a visual connection with the audience. It doesn't matter if a person just wants to have fun or he wants to get involved with a community with his unique voice, vlogging can help anyone express himself as a creator similar to how blogging helped writers' decades ago.

Keeping this in mind, present study aims to explore the vlogging in Pakistan from the origin, current status to the potential aspects. To dig into the topic under consideration, the study has following objectives:

- To explore the historical background, reasons and growth of vlogging in Pakistan.
- To identify the future of vlogging in Pakistan

Conceptual Background

Vlogging has been used over a period of time for multiple purposes and it is evident from the literature that effectiveness of vlogging is raising with every day passing. Kanza Khalid (2019) explored the influence of vloggers on product endorsement. The study revealed that vloggers affected the consumer buying behavior and brand promotion. It was proven that vlogs could be major factor helping in building brand and that the vloggers did not only earn through vlogging or gain popularity and reward in their life but they could be equally important in branding strategies that are taking place through vlogging. In contrast to that,

present study is determined how and why vlogging was introduced in Pakistan and how it has been growing since its introduction in the country. In another study, Juha Munnukka and Devdeep Maity (2019) discovered that crowd support in the vlogs upgrades para-social relationship with the vlogger, subsequently further cultivating the vlogger's apparent believability as an endorser. The outcomes showed that video blogs with significant degrees of audience support are bound to expand the acknowledgment of the brand's underwriting through improved believability discernments among watchers. Thus, time ought to be spent picking vloggers who are dynamic in the online local area. This investigation adds to the comprehension of the unmistakable qualities of video blogs that explicitly influence underwriting viability. The present study aims to explicit vlogging in Pakistan keeping it limited to understand how vlogging initiated and how it is growing and benefiting people of Pakistan.

Michael Stelzner (2019) conducted an interview of Cody Wanner, a classically trained filmmaker who specializes in telling compelling video stories, emphasized the importance of vlogging by stating "video is unlike the written word, photos, or audio because it's so incredibly emotional. Video can make your viewer feel something those other media on their own can't match because it's a combination of all of those things". One can literally put text and audio and photos into a video. It's a trifecta. Great commercials, great narratives, and different sorts of video documentaries make people feel a certain way. And the result of feeling something is often movement or action. In the same manner, researcher of present study believes in the same lines as vlogging is an innovative tool to address large number or audience by sharing life with your own narration. This is the medium which does not require approval from second person. The creator has all the controls in his hand thus the originality of the content is ensured.

Lubna Zaheer (2018) expressed that rising utilization of new media advances has incredibly affected individuals in recent years in Pakistan. Predominantly, the young people of nation are primarily engaged with utilizing new media specifically portable and social sites. The utilization of new media, in one way, has projected positive effects particle the country's childhood assisting them with getting more educated, politically and socially implicated dynamic. Vlogging is also presumed to be popular among youth of Pakistan. Many youngsters are vlogging about their interests like food, lifestyle, health and weight management, make up and self grooming, technology etc and their subscribers are getting the benefits from the usefulness of these vloggers.

Vlogs have been beneficial for learning new techniques and methods for proficiency in communication. Christelle Combe and Tatiana Codreanu (2016) conducted a study titled "Vlogging: a new channel for language learning and intercultural exchanges". It was discovered that from one viewpoint, video blogs offer freedoms for talking abilities, advanced proficiency abilities, multilingual companion learning, and assessment clashes through social generalizations, and intercultural abilities. Then again, video blogs are restricted by the moral parts of interpersonal organizations and by the etymological abilities of informal community

clients. In a proper showing setting, 'texfrançais' channel can be an asset for instructors to consider the capability of a multimodal intuitive stage to practice. Vlogs can possibly help create advanced education and talking abilities before a camera and energize distribution.

Vlogs are considered a powerful marketing channel for companies (Lee & Watkins, 2016), one that allows their brands or products to be presented in positive light and targeted to certain consumer segments. Companies often offer vloggers products or services for free, gift cards, or money, and in exchange, the vloggers provide positive and interesting content about the products or services in their vlogs (Liljander, Gummerus, & Söderlund, 2015). In these situations, vloggers are considered the endorsers. In the context of a vlog, an endorser is defined as a vlogger who enjoys public recognition and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good, service, or brand by appearing with that good, service, or brand in a vlog post. Therefore, this form of vlogging is considered equivalent to the concept of celebrity endorsement found in McCracken's research (1989)

Previous studies show that published content with product- or brand-related information, evaluations, and experiences influences audience's attitudes, brand credibility, and behavior (Chung and Cho, 2017, Ho et al., 2015). Thus, not surprisingly, vlogs have become an important channel of product- and service-related information and an integral part of consumers' buying decision process (Chu and Kamal, 2008, Ho et al., 2015, Hsu et al., 2013). The diverse composition drew the attention of Internet users who, in addition to being able to consume the platform freely, also enjoy the possibility of promoting their productions through YouTube vlogs (Lee, 2017). Keeping in mind the possibilities and large horizon of vlogging, this research will explore how vlogging started and is growing in Pakistan. It is important to investigate the origin before going into studying the effects of vlogging.

The above mentioned studies revealed that vlogging is new genera of self representation and vloggers are self made celebrities with whom audiences connect through their vlogs. There is no sufficient literature to identify the gaps with respect to Pakistan. Many vloggers are producing their vlogs in Pakistan and audiences like them subscribe their channels. It is important to identify the origin and growth of vlogs. The present study aims to meet this gap and will be beneficial for the new researcher and people belonging to vlogging directly or indirectly. After reviewing the above literature, following are the research questions drawn for the scenario of Vlogging in Pakistan.

RQ 1. How did vlogging start in Pakistan?

RQ 2. Why vlogging was introduced and is growing in Pakistan?

RQ 3. Does vloggiing has bright future in Pakistan?

Material and Methods

Present study is purely a qualitative research and required to have interaction with potential respondents who could give vital information on the topic under observation. For this purpose, vloggers from all over Pakistan were selected for conducting in-depth interviews using the purposive sampling method. Since the usage of YouTube is just 1.1% and there is no exact count of vloggers in Pakistan, it is estimated that number of vloggers is in thousands only. Very few of them have subscribers in millions and thousands. Many people own YouTube channels but not exactly using it for vlogging purpose.

Selection Criteria for Vloggers

To select the potential respondents, following condition were applied. As per the requirement of the present study, the vloggers must have;

1. At least thousand subscribers.
2. Uploaded at least 20-25 original video on YouTube.
3. Produced videos on Lifestyle, Food, Travel or Makeup/beauty categories.
4. Communicated with audiences in comment section of the uploaded video.

On the basis of above mentioned criteria, 10 influential vloggers including 5 beauty and lifestyle vloggers, 3 travel vloggers and 2 food vloggers were selected who have secured a decent number of followers and viewers on their respective channels. Seeking the precautionary measures during COVID-19, telephonic interviews were conducted.

Limitations of the study

Present study has following limitations:

- The study is limited to explore the origin and growth of vlogging in Pakistan and no impact was studied during research.
- As there is no calculated number available of vloggers in Pakistan so it was not possible to interview all vloggers. A study is needed to maintain the record of vloggers in Pakistan.
- Only YouTube vloggers were selected for the study. Vloggers from Facebook live, Instagram IGTV and other streaming channels were not included in the sampling.
- Only Pakistani vloggers from various cities of Pakistan were interviewed for the research. No Pakistani vlogger from abroad was included in the study.
- Because of time limitation, the content of vlogs was not studied.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study have been divided into two major categories and have been analyzed as follows:

Origin and Growth of Vlogging in Pakistan

The findings of the study revealed that for majority of the respondents (100%), vlogging was the best way to express them to the world. This is an open platform where everyone can perform in his or her own style with own limitations. Most of the respondents agreed on a fact that social media gives many opportunities to a person to grow in life but through vlogging they get to connect with the audience in more vivid way. According to majority of the respondents, proper vlogging started in back in 2015 in Pakistan. Few respondents stated that Umair Khan was the first person to put up a vlog on YouTube in 2011. In contrast to this, the vlogging initiated in 2000 (Dan Sanchez , 2019) and it has been used to represent the culture and trends of the respective country. In case of Pakistan, vlogging's initial phase was supposed to be enthusiastic but YouTube was banned in Pakistan for three years due to blasphemy issue. During this time, vlogging became popular among neighboring Asian countries but Pakistan couldn't meet that boost. Later, in 2016 vlogging was channelized and people started to earn through vlogging. Since then off and on many people have been coming into this field.

To the question that is vlogging growing in Pakistan, respondents stated that vlogging is growing in Pakistan rapidly because people now are aware of importance of social media particularly youtube. Not only random public, traditional media/film celebrities and TV channels are now also utilizing benefits of youtube by accessing the audience globally. Majority of the respondents said initially there were only few people vlogging in Pakistan back in 2015 but now the number has risen to great extent because of the accessibility through internet and gadgets required for vlogging. Any person who has got some talent knows now how to let the world know about this talent. On very basic terms, people start their youtube channel and keep on uploading videos and that's how they become famous.

Respondents were of the view that since they have been vlogging for past 5 years on average, they feel very enthusiastic to produce more and more vlogs. Audiences' response keeps them on the go and helps them to refine their content. Few respondents stated that initially they were vlogging once or twice a month but now they are vlogging on daily basis. Respondents said that like any other profession, vlogging demands lots of time and energy. At first, people get demoralized when there is no recognition of their content but later on when audience comment on vlogs it satisfies the vlogger and motivates to even work harder.

Reasons for Vlogging

To the question that why do people vlog, majority of the respondents stated that there are numerous reasons for people to produce vlogs. One of the most important aspects of vlogging is to create a visual connection with your audience. Through vlogging, vloggers not only have freedom to express their thoughts, opinions and talent but there are no boundaries like traditional media to appear on screen. Mainly, vlogging inspires to share the talent like Makeup skills, travelling, cooking, baking, technical skills etc with the world which otherwise would not be possible through traditional media. Secondly, people like to document their personal experiences so that audience can get benefit from this. One of the respondents stated that she opted vlogging because she was very passionate for becoming an anchor but she was not given opportunity on traditional media because she didn't fall into the perfect figure criteria regardless the passion and talent she had. Her curvilinear body was never allowed to appear on TV. All respondents agreed on one notion that through vlogging one becomes famous but it demands lots of hard work, passion and time to invest in.

On inquiring about the specific objective to vlog for, 70% of the respondents stated that for them main objective was to share their lifestyle, talent, knowledge with the world. Few respondents were working as bloggers before starting vlogging but later they found vlogging novel and likeable as compared to blogging. 30% vloggers responded that as vlogging doesn't require any specific education and expertise and there is no age restriction in becoming a vlogger so they found vlogging very effective to learn and earn.

"Vlogging is very important and effective tool to raise voice on certain issues which otherwise would not be discussed on traditional media platform." said majority of the respondents. One of the respondents stated that audience considers a vlogger an influencer and seek their opinion regarding different prevailing issues because they can relate to their opinion. For example, back in 2018 on a blasphemy issue, audience seek the response of one of Pakistan's top vlogger Irfan Junejo on which he responded that he doesn't want to become of part of any controversies so he will not comment on it. On his reaction his audiences were very angry and many people unsubscribed his channel. Respondents also stated that being vlogger it becomes their responsibility to guide the audience because people are constantly keeping an eye on vloggers' activities.

Future Aspect

On investigating that whether vlogging is good for Pakistani public as a producer and a viewer, respondents were of the view that Pakistanis are very talented but unfortunately they were not able to show their talent to the world up till now. Vlogging is an incredible profession and if used properly it can be very beneficial (Shawky, 2012). It doesn't cost anything to start vlogging. A person can use his phone and internet and world is there to see your expertise. As stated by Ahendra (nd) There's no doubt that the invention of the smartphone changed the

face of marketing forever, particularly the methods in which marketing content is delivered. Video content is fast becoming the number one way to reach audiences, which is why vlogging is such an important skill for any business to have. Most of the people start it as a fun activity but if it involves passion and dedication it will ultimately pay you back.

“Like any other profession, everything is not smooth in vlogging.” Respondents reported. Majority of them said that lack of novel and creative ideas is the biggest hindrance in the profession of vlogging. Most of the time vloggers have no content to produce so they start plagiarizing other’s content which is not so appreciated by the audiences. Being creative and original is very important for vlogging. Another hurdle is unstable internet and electricity in our country. Few vloggers stated that as vlogging is has become a global phenomenon; there must be dedicated courses and certifications to teach our youth how to take advantage of this advancement.

Respondents believe that increasing number of vloggers in the country is healthy for boosting social and economic platforms. This is not worsening the image of the country. The responsible use of every medium is important. Audiences are well aware of the good content creators so they do not support filthy and deteriorating content. Few respondents stated that just like TikTok was banned few days back because of negligent use, many people admired this decision of government. Same should be applied on every social media platform. Vloggers are well aware of their social responsibilities so they always try to produce healthy, funny and relatable vlogs. This is important for any technological advancement as the usage depends on the masses and its responsibility of everyone to make wise use of technology. It is also considerable that digital media monitoring is playing pivotal role in keeping it sane and peaceful.

Lastly, majority of the respondents stated that gradually they started earning handsome amount from vlogging but its never the same. Vlogging can be fine source of earning if done with patience and consistency. As stated by Shawky (2021) Most famous vloggers out there are making a lot of money using sponsored ads or promoting their own products or even other people’s products, big brands reach out to them and pay them for promoting their next product, so this is a pretty good reason to start vlogging. It depends on the originality and quality of the content which brings audience to you and increasing number of views, like and sharing ensures its will pay you back. For many respondents, it’s the reputation which matters more than the amount they are being paid. Respondents added that they always encourage their audience and people who seek guidance from them to become vlogger. It’s undoubtedly a healthy profession in which a person learns a lot and with the passage of time it pays you back as well. Also, it doesn’t require any proper schooling and training so any one with original and quality content can become a vlogger regardless of being a male or a female.

Conclusion

On the basis of findings and analysis it can be concluded digital media has become more personalized form of medium and audiences like to use it not only as a viewer but as a producer as well. Vlogging is a creative experience which provides education, information, entertainment and freedom of expression at the same place. Vlogging was introduced back in 2011 in Pakistan. It was high time to enter the digital world but with the ban on YouTube for 3 years, the country couldn't stand tall in digital world. Later, after ban lifting, vlogging formally initiated in 2016 and since then it has given boost to the digital networking in Pakistan as people are now connected through digital platform where they work, produce different types of content, share with public and make their subscribers. Vlogging has been very effective in providing people employment sources. Many brands now invest in marketing with vloggers then producing advertisements with heavy investments.

Decisively, the future of vlogging is very promising in the country. Many creative and talented people have been found through vlogging who are representing Pakistan globally. Vloggers are celebrities whom everyone adores these days so it becomes their social responsibility to spread positivity. Nobody likes to watch deteriorating content thus positive use of technology is very beneficial for country as it helps boost the socio-economic condition of the country by providing employment opportunities and raising life standards of people.

Recommendations

Finally, some suggestions have been drawn considering the potential of vlogging in the country, these are;

- Freedom of expression must be availed very responsibly. Monitoring of social media is as important as traditional media. PTA carries out cyber vigilance and actively pursues blocking and removing of online content which is unlawful under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PTA Annual Report, 2019). Cyber crime department and ISPR are playing significant role in monitoring the content relating to ethnicity, religious intolerance and national defense so vloggers must be very careful while producing their content.
- There must be a proper policy behind every YouTube channel. Channels must not be monetized until they meet all SOPs.
- Educational institutions can play important role in educating the society and creating awareness about internet usage. Educational institutions must take the responsibility to educate masses about beneficial uses of vlogging. Skill development trainings must be introduced for the potential people to excel in this field.

- Ministry of Information and Technology must pay attention to the technological advancement in the country and resources must be provided to the prospective people as it is need of the hour.
- There must be a dedicated forum for vloggers to address their issues and they must be facilitated in all aspects as they are representing Pakistan in the world.
- It is recommended that more research is needed in this area. Vlogging is assumed to have affected the masses so the impact studies as well as content of the vlogs can be analyzed in future researches.

Implication of the study

Present study will be beneficial in academic and professional fields. It is presumed to be a stepping stone in the research on vlogging at national level. Pakistan is expanding its roots in digitalization and with more people coming into vlogging, this study will help researchers in identifying the current prospects of vlogging in the country. Also, it can provide a base for future research on impacts and content analysis of vlogging in Pakistan. It can be beneficial for the Ministry of Information and Technology in Pakistan to take measures to meet the gaps which have been established during the research.

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