

User creativity made YouTube the world's biggest music service

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Alternative variations from popular artists' videos may reach an audience of millions, shows the new study from Finland's Aalto University.

Music is the most popular YouTube content by several measures, including [video](#) views and search activity. The world's first academic study on YouTube music consumption by Aalto University in Finland shows that one reason for its popularity lies in users' own video. People re-use original music by popular artists to create their own alternative video variations, which may reach an audience of millions and can be found alongside any popular music title.

"These variations that we call user-appropriated videos are readily available and well promoted on YouTube. This is what makes YouTube an interesting music service," says Dr of Technology Lassi A. Liikkanen from Aalto University.

Lyrics and still videos, which only include music, rank highly in YouTube search results. A popular video, say a new Beyoncé song, may share its audience collaterally with similar user-generated videos because they appear next to one another in the search results and suggested content. The researchers named this the halo effect.

Three types of videos

In this study the researchers created a typology of YouTube music

videos.

"Our analysis found three primary music video types: traditional, user-appropriated, and derivative music videos," post-doctoral researcher Antti Salovaara explains.

Through a series of qualitative and quantitative studies of YouTube content, researchers studied both the popularity of music videos and the attention they get from the audience.

The study shows that users are willing to listen to music from Youtube even without video content. They are also happy with music with rolling lyrics over a still photo, cover versions, and even parodies of the authentic music content.

"YouTube transformed the digital media world. It changed music listening practices. Finally, we have a scientific record of this wonderfully rich cultural phenomenon," the primary author, Lassi A. Liikkanen, explains.

"Earlier studies ignored music's tremendous pull, even though it must have been obvious to everyone using YouTube. We only have a single academic reference point from six years back. In this time, the artists have changed, but [music](#) has remained on top of the charts."

More information: Liikkanen L. & Salovaara A. Music on YouTube: User engagement with Traditional, User-Appropriated and Derivative Videos. *Computers in Human Behavior*. [DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.067](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.067)

Provided by Aalto University

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