



{ CONNECT THE DOTS } YOUTUBE BY THE NUMBERS

Bans, partner programmes, baby sharks...

Anesha George

19.4 to 20 billion

That's how many videos have been uploaded to the platform over the past 20 years.

Precise data is hard to come by, since YouTube only released its first such estimate in April. It tends to be cagey about numbers, and won't allow outside agencies to audit its algorithms to study, for instance, why some videos are promoted over others.

19.4 billion public videos is the estimate by researchers at the Initiative for Digital Public Infrastructure (IDPI) of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who created a software program in 2023 to scrape through the platform and arrive at an estimate.

"While at first glance it looks like YouTube is finally sharing some numbers, the flexibility of its language — do the figures include private and deleted videos too? — underscores the need for independent research," says Ryan McGrady, a senior researcher at IDPI.

94%

of the site's traffic is driven by videos with 10,000 or more views, according to the IDPI study. These videos make up less than 4% of total uploads.

4%

About 4% of videos have no views at all; 74% of videos have no comments; about 32% have no likes, according to the IDPI study.

2.53 billion

people use YouTube per month, according to data from Statista for 2025.

491 million

people use the platform in India, making it the largest YouTube audience in the world.

491 MILLION PEOPLE USE THE PLATFORM IN INDIA, MAKING IT THE LARGEST YOUTUBE AUDIENCE IN THE WORLD

>3 million

creators are part of the YouTube Partner Program (YPP), launched in 2007 to help people monetise their content (via revenue-sharing from advertisements, fan-funding features and product placement).

1,000 subscribers

To be eligible for YPP, a channel must have at least 1,000 subscribers plus 4,000 public watch hours in the previous 12 months (with a separate set of parameters in play for YouTube Shorts).

15 billion

That's how many times Baby Shark Dance, that absurdly annoying and persistent earworm by the South Korean edutainment company Pinkfong, has been viewed since it was uploaded in 2016. Pinkfong's version (the origins of the song are unclear) was sung by the 10-year-old Korean-American Hope Segoine.

5 billion

That's how many times South Korean rapper Psy's Gangnam Style has been viewed, since it was released in 2012. It was the first video to hit one billion views on YouTube. "...what was so special about that one song? I still don't know, to this day," Psy told The New York Times, in 2022.

405 million

With over 405 million subscribers, MrBeast aka Jimmy Donaldson is the world's wealthiest YouTuber. At 27, he is worth an estimated \$1 billion and is the world's only known self-made billionaire under 30.

He started out at 13, with videos about gaming hacks and gaming fails. More recently, he has had millions of views for videos in which he conducts what is now called stunt philanthropy (Tipping the Pizza Delivery Guy \$10,000; Buying a Homeless Guy A Home). He has also segued into food and fundraising. Donaldson owns MrBeast

Burgers and the chocolate and snack brand Feastables. He is co-founder of Team Trees, launched in 2019, with a target of planting 20 million trees, via donations; it has raised \$24 million so far. In 2021, he also co-founded Team Seas, aimed at ocean conservancy and clean-up; it has raised over \$30 million.

10 million dislikes

The dubious record of YouTube video with the most dislikes goes... to YouTube. The platform's Rewind 2018: Everyone Controls Rewind, a recap of its biggest cultural trends in 2018 — featuring clips posted by Will Smith, Trevor Noah, Bhuvan Bam and others — was accused of being self-serving, gimmicky and forced (among other things).

2.9 million channels

containing more than 47 million videos were taken down between January and March this year, for violating guidelines, YouTube has said. Three strikes on YouTube results in automatic termination. The most common violations include spam videos, "misleading" content, scams and nudity.

2.1 million

India topped the list of countries with most videos taken down: 2.1 million, between January and March alone. Brazil (1.3 million) and the US (889,816) make up the top 3.

There has been criticism of how loosely "misleading" is defined by YouTube, and how differently it is enforced in different countries. There has likewise been criticism of how bans on people and changes in regulations are issued, enforced and repealed in arbitrary ways.

US President Donald Trump, for instance, was banned from posting on YouTube after the Capitol riots of 2021, but his channel was reinstated in 2023. Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones was also banned, in 2018, but resurfaced in a controversial interview with YouTuber Logan Paul the following year.

Content moderators, meanwhile, have now been told that up to half of a video may contain offending content, up from the previous cap of 25%. The New York Times reported on June 9. The policy shift, though not publicly declared, was introduced in training material for the army of content moderators that, alongside AI-led algorithms, work to weed out material deemed unfit by the platform.

culture

Word on the street

A delightful collection of poems on Indian cities pulls together verse by former emperors, modern-day activists, soldiers, sages, Nobel winners



SHUTTERSTOCK

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It began with a bout of homesickness. While studying for a degree in economics at Yale in late-2020, Bilal Moin began to feel a yearning for Mumbai. He sought refuge in poems about the city, initially turning to classics by Arun Kolatkar, Adil Jussawalla and Dom Moraes.

After a while, he cast his net wider. Entering keywords into the university library archive, he discovered poets he had never heard of, in journals long-since defunct.

Over snow-laden evenings in Connecticut, he expanded his search further still. He was now looking for poems on Kolkata, Delhi, Bengaluru. By Spring, he had collected over 600 poems set across 40 Indian cities, spread across 2,000 years.

In 2023, he mentioned his "document of homesick scribbles" to Shawkat Toorawa, a professor of comparative literature at Yale. "He pointed out that, pretty much by accident, I had put together an anthology," says Moin, speaking from Oxford, where he is pursuing a Master's degree.

Last month, that collection was released as a 1,072-page hardcover anthology: The Penguin Book of Poems on the Indian City. It holds 375 poems by 264 poets, translated from 20 languages.

Readers can explore the very different Mumbais of the Jewish playwright and art critic Nissim Ezekiel and the Dalit activist Namdeo Dhasal.

They can lament the loss of Shahjahanabad with the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar. Revisit the colonial-era Delhi of Sarojini Naidu, the Haridwar of Manjul Bajaj, or discover a tiny microcosm of India in Thangjam Iboipishak's Imphal

Centuries of verse

"on a scrap of dried out / soil under a dried up tree / a deer stands in the very centre of New Delhi..."

the Polish poet Katarzyna Zechenter writes, in A Nilgai Deer in the City of Delhi.

Picking what to include and deciding where to stop was a huge challenge, Moin says.

"Penguin," he adds, laughing, "neglected to give me an upper limit for the number of poems I could include."

The oldest one in the collection is Pataliputra, an ode to that ancient Mauryan capital (and ancestor to modern-day Patna), by Tamil Sangam poet

Mosi Keeranar, sometime between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE.

"May all of Pataliputra, swimming in gold, / where white-tusked elephants splash about / in the Sona River, be yours..." he writes.

One of the most recent is Imphal as a Pond, by the 22-year-old queer activist Mesak Takhelmayum.

Jungle of people...

Securing permission for some was tricky. "I've featured writers who maybe had one or two poems published 15 years ago, and then seemingly never published again," Moin says. "So I had to send a lot of Facebook messages to people with similar names, saying 'Hi, are you this poet?'"

He dug through multiple translations, and consulted with linguists, scholars or simply friends and acquaintances, to identify the best or most accurate translations.

There was a lot of debate over which translation of Tagore's two poems, Song of the City and The Flute, to choose.

For the former, he chose the translation by William Radice:

"O city, jungle of people, / Road after road, buildings innumerable, / Everything buyable, everything saleable, / Uproar, hubbub, noise."

In loving memory

As he read through centuries of verse, Moin says he noticed something that thrilled him: over and over, certain cities inspired the same sentiment. Whether this was an effect of culture, literary mirroring or an idea that took root and spread, tracing these strands felt extraordinary, he says.

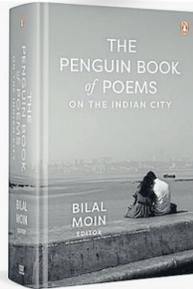
Kolkata's poets tend to look at the city as a harsh mistress, their unrequited love for her both romantic and torturous. Mumbai poets struggle to come to terms with their city's glaring inequalities.

As for Delhi, "it doesn't matter if you're reading poetry from the 14th century or the 21st," Moin says. "The theme is always that this was once a great city, but it no longer is. And that one loves Delhi for its past."

"A lot of fantastic gay poets, such as Hosang Merchant and R Raj Rao, are featured," Moin adds. "It's interesting to see, through their eyes, how the city enables the marginalised to express themselves, while on the other hand still stifling them."

There are poets in these pages who are also activists and fighters, soldiers and sages, memory-keepers looking to record a city's present, its quirks and flaws, before it is all erased and redrawn.

But most poets in the anthology, Moin points out, are none of these things. They are simply the "loafers" of Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's imagination, drifting carefree through gardens, temples and lanes, finding ways to turn the minutiae of the everyday into art.



{ DEE FOR DRAMA }

Deepanjana Pal



Love, and other bugs

Materialists doesn't check all the boxes, but it does champion the idea of love, and in doing so serves as an antidote to cynicism

I have a deep-seated aversion to AI-generated content. Even so, watching Chris Evans deliver his heroic monologue in Materialists (2025) made me wish there was a version of Celine Song's new film in which artificial intelligence had scrubbed Evans out and replaced him with Cary Grant. Or a young Shammil Kapoor. Or Gong Yoo (of Train to Busan).

Evans is the petard on which Materialists hoists itself.

He plays John, the quintessential artist: short on money, but tall in every other way. He is a man of passion and sensitivity; a man who makes love seem easy. Unfortunately, when embodied by Evans, John has all the charm of melting vanilla ice-cream.

He doesn't make one want to throw caution to the wind. Instead, he makes an excellent case for warily raising one's standards.

It doesn't help that Pedro Pascal plays John's counterpart, a capitalist Prince Charming named Harry. He lives in a \$12 million penthouse in New York, works at a private equity firm. But, most importantly, he has Pascal's crinkly-eyed smile and gift

Even Pedro Pascal's crinkly-eyed smile can't plug all the gaps. Materialists isn't nearly as heart-wrenching as writer-director Celine Song's last film, Past Lives (2023).



for turning vulnerability into a pheromone trigger. One of the loveliest moments in the film is when Harry crouches to show what he'd look like if he was half a foot shorter, becoming smaller, sadder and more insecure with every lost inch.

At the apex of the love triangle is Lucy (Dakota Johnson), a matchmaker who presents herself as an emotional calculator adept at cracking the math of romantic relationships, while also mournfully declaring early on: "I'm going to die alone." It's a line that makes everyone laugh, in the film and outside it, because if someone as radiant as Lucy can't find love, well, what hope is there for any of us?

Yet, as Song shows us over the course of Materialists, for all her slaying and sashaying, Lucy is floundering. She keeps repeating how important it is to be practical when looking for a match, but it soon becomes clear that the person she's trying to convince, first and foremost, is herself.

Through the film, long-held conventions of gender and romance do little to empower either the men or the women. Even for those who appear to be thriving, marriage appears like the equivalent of a band-aid on a gaping wound: it can't heal the injury, but it can help cover it up.

Writer-director Song's boldest play in Materialists is her bid to redefine marriage as an act of romantic agency, wrenching it away from its history as an economic and social contract that commodifies women. In the film, marriage ends up being the most impractical of decisions, taken by two people because they can't help themselves.

At the end of Materialists, Lucy "settles" for a man whose greatest commendation is that he proposes to her with a ring fashioned out of a plucked flower. The "loser" emerges as the prize catch. Or would have, if Evans hadn't played John so blandly that everything about him felt true.

Much like its key characters, Materialists doesn't check all the boxes, but it does serve as an antidote to cynicism.

Song adamantly champions the idea that love at its sweetest and most impractical is a dream worth striving for. In a world full of grief and despair, its decision to celebrate unpretentious romance is not just refreshing but feels like a necessary act of defiance.

(To reach Deepanjana Pal with feedback, write to @dpanjana on Instagram)