

New Media Realities - the User Revolution

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Abstract:

We are seeing a revolution in the way people are using media. Digital media production tools and the internet mean audiences are shifting from being merely passive consumers of media to becoming active producers. Audiences are moving away from consuming only traditional media content towards consuming content made by their peers and by new operators with smart new business models. The internet and its associated digital production and distribution technologies are dramatically changing the media landscape. We must be careful not to focus only on new technologies and new production tools and think that this is what the new media revolution is all about. New media is much more than a technological revolution. It is a cultural revolution based on a whole range of new media user behaviours.

Young audiences, in particular, want new media models, not just what they've had before. They don't want to see what's always been on traditional media platforms being shovelled onto the new platforms. They are consuming and producing media for themselves and for each other that is totally different from that offered by mainstream media.

Participatory platforms such as blogs, social networking sites, wikis, video and picture hosting sites, citizen journalism sites, mashup sites, virtual communities and podcasting all provide extensive creative space for digital authors. Combine all this virtual studio space with inexpensive production tools, high levels of digital literacy and always-on networks and it's conceivable that everyone could become an author.

While we might question the quality of much user-produced content, the fact is, tens of millions of people are engaging in this participatory behaviour. Those who are doing this feel they are part of a new emerging culture that gives them more control over the information in their lives, which is empowering and contagious.