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VIDEO PLATFORMS
AND PRACTICES

VIDEO BEST PRACTICES
INTRODUCTION

Digital video is an integral part of our consumer communication strategy, and to help you understand our approach to promoting video content, here are some guidelines we follow when determining the platform for videos we tend to feature.

Bear in mind that this may be different to what works for your own channels, but we wanted to provide you with some insight into our preferences and strategies for planning, producing, and promoting digital video content.
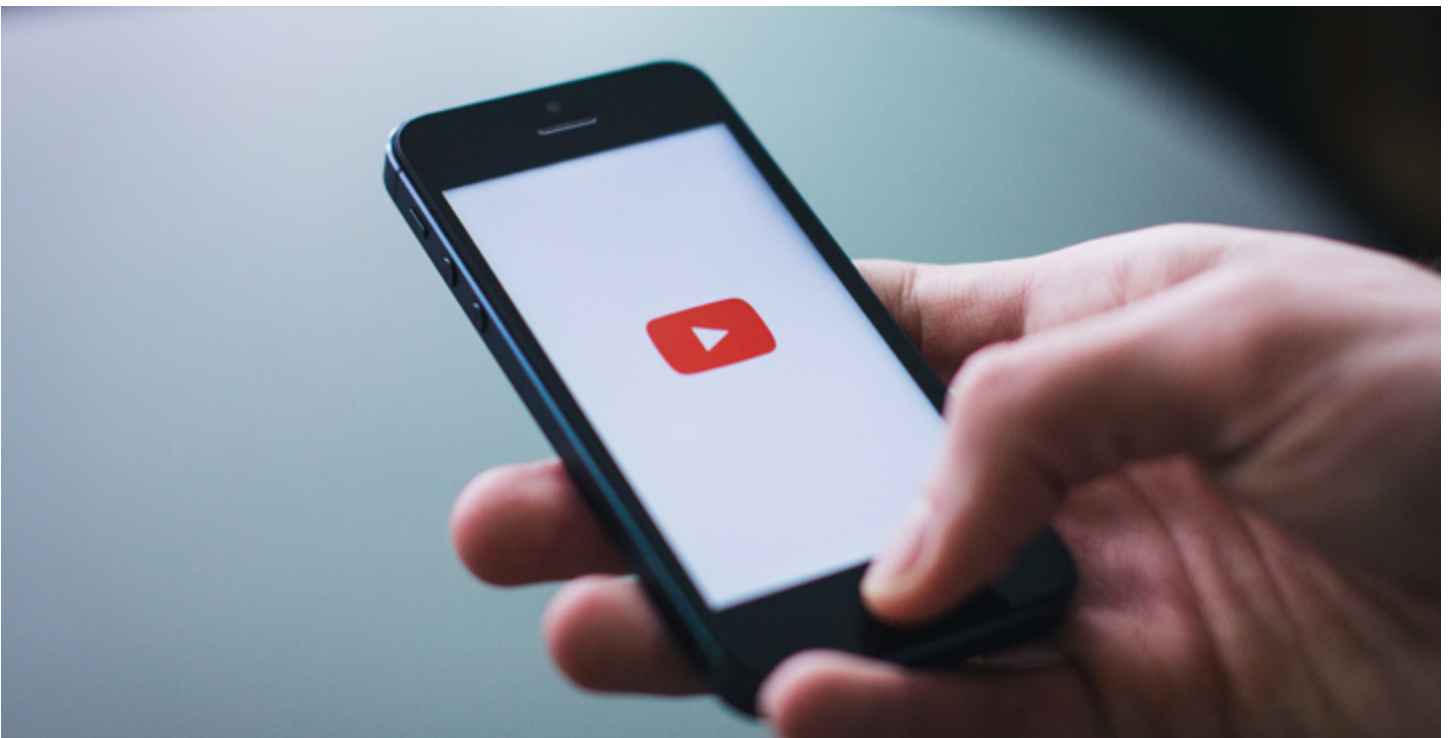
YOUTUBE

YouTube is the platform to which Virginia Tourism Corporation publishes all of our consumer-facing video content. Here are some things to keep in mind when developing your YouTube channel and the content you choose to publish on it.

1. Consumer Relevancy

YouTube can sometimes become a "dumping ground" for video content, whether it's relevant to your channel's audience or not. However, every piece of content uploaded has a greater effect on the channel. With that in mind, it's important to ensure that all public content on a channel is relevant to the intended audience.

YouTube's algorithm will serve up content as "recommended videos" to both current and target subscribers. This can come either in the right rail of their browser or as an in-video auto-play. While all channel content is fair game, the platform favors new content in its recommendations, similar to other social platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

Publishing everything to a YouTube channel runs the risk of serving up potentially irrelevant content to your audience. If a consumer gets hit with something industry-facing after looking at something they're actually interested in, there's the chance that the user is going to bounce, potentially dislike the video or flag as irrelevant and maybe even unsubscribe.

Yes - there is an option to publish a video as "unlisted" so it doesn't appear on your channel or in public searches - but the mixing of consumer intent does have an impact on the channel's popularity. So while it's easy to publish to the channel for the sake of embedding video within emails or web pages - it's not always the best approach to take.

2. Thumbnails

Don't treat thumbnails as an after-thought. Studies indicate 90% of the best performing videos on YouTube have custom thumbnails. Humans are visual creatures, so that image is what's going to stop the thumb scroll and encourage a user to click through to your content.

EFFECTIVE

eye-catching; provides a sense of place; communicates the story and theme; on-brand; clear imagery

INEFFECTIVE

dark, lacking in clarity; doesn't have elements that stand out or would stop a thumb scroll; ambiguous

3. Video Titles, Descriptions & Keywords

Behind Google, YouTube is the second most powerful search engine on the Internet - and like Google there's a number of SEO factors to consider when carving out a presence on the channel.

Just as you would optimize a web page or blog article for search engines, apply the same thought process for video content on YouTube.

- Choose a compelling title that naturally includes your target keyword;

- YouTube only displays the first two or three lines of text in a video description, so make sure to front-load it with the most important information like CTAs or links.

- Tag your video with popular - but relatable - keywords. This will help associate your video with similar content on the platform and help broaden reach. However, you'll be penalized for irrelevant tags added for the sake of gathering views.

Just as you shouldn't dismiss the visible title and description on the channel itself - it's also important to include a keyword in the video's file name.. YouTube will read the file name and all the code that comes with it when uploaded.

- **Proper: Virginia_Fall_Vacations.mp4**   - **Poor: VTC_FallAd_2020_FINAL.mp4**

4. Content for Kids

YouTube has taken extra steps to make the platform more kid-friendly. When uploading a video to your channel, there is a check box to indicate whether or not the content "is made for kids." Checking "no" does not mean that your content is marked mature or isn't kid friendly - just that kids aren't the intended audience, which is the intention in most cases.

Videos that are made for kids are categorized differently within YouTube. Parents can set up a child account that only filters through acceptable content targeted for children (kid's shows, cartoons, etc.). However, this content isn't as heavily promoted within the platform and videos tagged as "made for kids" can't be added to collaborative playlists or featured on other channels.

VIMEO

Vimeo is the platform to which VTC publishes all of it's industry-facing video content. It's important to differentiate content intended for consumers versus a more specific audience (industry partners, presentations, private events, etc.).

VERSIONING

Unlike YouTube, Vimeo gives the opportunity to replace video files on the back end without affecting the URL. This is extremely helpful when distributing video content that may need to be updated over time.

DOWNLOAD VIDEO

Also unlike YouTube, Vimeo offers the capability for users to download content directly from the channel. This makes for easier distribution of completed videos to industry partners than file transfer services like Sharepoint, Dropbox, OneDrive, or Water, where video links take up storage space and eventually expire.

COLLECTIONS

Vimeo Collections function much like a traditional "playlist" within YouTube; however a Vimeo collection allows for more unique branding and information sharing. You're given the opportunity to customize the look and layout of these collections and include any relevant information to the content. This makes it an excellent way to distribute serial or campaign driven content in an informative and concise manner, and is another tool that makes Vimeo our preferred platform for distributing industry-facing content.

- Example: https://vimeo.com/channels/virginianttw

FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM / TWITTER

- Length: Anywhere from 15 seconds to one minute long

- Orientation: Square or portrait format (4×5) preferred by the channel

- We use 1280×1600 for our optimized content

- Format: MP4 or MOV

- Editing:

    - Quick visual hook (users decide within the first three seconds whether to continue watching a piece of content)

    - Minimal editing throughout video

    - Minimal graphics or logo usage (not favored by the platforms)

    - Always use captions (the majority of users watch with audio turned off)

YOUTUBE / VIMEO

- Length: The current average video length on YouTube is four and a half minutes; however the platform tends to boost content over 10 minutes.

  - Don't stretch out pieces unnecessarily. If your content doesn't reach the 10-minute threshold organically, it won't matter whether the piece is three minutes or five minutes.

- Orientation: 16×9 (1080×1920 (HD) | 3840×2160 (4K))

- Format: MP4 or MOV

- Editing:

  - Can be more polished than on other platforms

  - Include a call to action at the end (doesn't have the ability to directly link off-site)

  - Voiceover and audio is more important (more engaged audience than Facebook)

  - Always use captions

AUDIO RIGHTS

Music is an important part of any video, but be careful of where you source it from. Use royalty and copyright-free audio and sound effects only.

The Facebook Sound Collection is a great tool for free music that can be used on Facebook. (Note: these tracks are good for use within the platform alone. If you cross-publish to YouTube you'll be flagged for copyright infringement).

For YouTube, they have a similar tool with the YouTube Audio Library. As with the Facebook Sound Collection, make sure you're using the audio solely for in-platform content.

OTHER AFFORDABLE MUSIC OPTIONS:

- Premium Beat
- Bensound
- Free Music Archive
- SoundCloud

VOICEOVER OPTIONS

Fiverr is a great option for professional voiceover options with a plethora of talent that you can choose from for your video. Most offer very quick turnaround times as well.

Note: always ensure that you purchase the rights needed to publish on the proper channels, (e.g. social media, websites, television) and for the appropriate amount of time (e.g. one month, one year, in perpetuity, etc.).

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