

Parasocial Relationships and Breakups with YouTubers

Emily Buellesbach

St. Norbert College

YouTube has become a popular platform over the years, specifically amongst Gen Z. Between the audience and YouTubers, who create content themselves, there are millions of people on this platform. YouTube is a breeding ground for parasocial relationships to take place. The purpose of this project is to describe, examine, and explain parasocial relationships on YouTube. This project identifies: who forms these parasocial relationships, the interactions that happen on YouTube, the effects of forming a parasocial relationship at a young age, how YouTubers can have brand credibility and create purchase intention, and how individuals choose which YouTuber to form a parasocial relationship with. I also touch on what a parasocial breakup is and the general effects of it. Here is the link to my project: <https://youtu.be/f4Oi7mtgHIs>.

The target audience for my project is individuals ages 7 to 25 years old. This wide range I have chosen for my audience is because ages 7 to 12 are the fastest growing audience for YouTube and ages 15 to 25 years old are the highest percentage of people who use YouTube (Tolbert & Drogos, 2019). I want to reach the most active and growing audience on this platform. In order to reach this target audience I have posted my project on YouTube. I created a video with an assortment of clips of famous and popular YouTubers to catch the attention of my target audience. I would ideally have people between the ages of 7 and 25 years old share, like, and comment on my video. This would allow it to be promoted and reach my target audience faster.

My project draws on nine research studies. Most of these research studies focus on parasocial relationships. I examine media users' different motives, needs, and preferences when they turn to these YouTubers (Liebers & Schramm, 2019). In addition to motives, I show research findings that suggest there is a positive correlation between choosing to co-view a video

and the strength of a parasocial relationship (Coddair, 2015). YouTubers have the option on every video for people to like, comment, and subscribe to their channel. The more subscribers and views on their videos, the more influence they have over viewers. With this strong presence and power YouTubers have, I focus on research about how the parasocial relationships adolescents form are critical to their identity formation and how they choose which YouTubers to watch. Other research I discovered draws on the influence YouTubers have over purchase intention, brand building, public relations and advertising all because of parasocial relationships they've formed. Lastly, my project draws on some research for temporary parasocial breakups on YouTube that can be seen when YouTubers are 'cancelled'.

I created this project by using iMovie. I screen recorded various clips of YouTubers and edited them all together to create one video. I inserted slides of research in the form of bullet points as well as having a voice over to introduce and explain the research in more depth. I have never made a video before so this was a learning experience, but after adding in the transitions, making cuts, adding in background music, and doing the voice overs, I think I made an interesting and educational video. I believe I achieved my purpose of synthesizing the different findings I found in an interesting and informative way. I chose what to include from research findings based on what I perceived to be helpful and relevant to my target audience. I believe putting this in the form of a video was a great format that allowed me to not only present my research but also visually show what I am talking about. I think I formatted this video in a strategic way that allowed the viewer to follow along. I also made sure I simplified terms so my audience could understand. Overall I feel my project turned out great.

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