



unesco



# Behind The Screens

## Insights from Digital Content Creators

Understanding their Intentions, Practices and Challenges

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## Executive Summary

**This UNESCO report, “Behind the Screens,” aims to provide valuable insights into the world of digital content creators.** The report highlights findings from a study about digital content creators' motivations, skills, practices, and challenges. Conducted by a research team at Bowling Green State University in the United States of America between August and September 2024, the study employed two methods. First, an online survey was conducted in 8 languages with responses from **500 content creators from 45 countries** and territories. Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 digital content creators to gather more detailed qualitative insights about their content creation practices and challenges.

For this study, **digital content creators are defined as individuals who regularly post content online for public consumption and have more than 1,000 followers**, which is the threshold to be qualified as nano-influencers.

The findings reveal that many digital content creators, often labelled as “influencers,” have a nuanced perception of their real or perceived influence. While only 19% of creators consider themselves consistently influential, they regularly provide information to their audiences. The study examined the sources creators rely on to develop their content and whether they take the time to verify information before sharing. **The findings reveal that ‘popularity’ – measured by the number of likes and views – is the most common indicator of credibility for online sources (42%).** Second to popularity, the ‘endorsements of content’ by trusted friends or experts also significantly impact how creators assess the credibility of online sources. **The prevalent lack of rigorous critical evaluation of information highlights an urgent need to enhance creators’ media and information literacy skills**, including identifying and using reliable fact-checking resources.

**The study also delved into the creators’ awareness of regulations governing digital content creation** in their respective countries and international standards related to freedom of expression and access to information, such as

Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Alarming, a majority of the digital content creators (59%) surveyed were either unfamiliar with or had only heard of regulatory frameworks and international standards relating to digital communications. **This gap underscores the necessity to inform creators about legal norms and regulations related to freedom of expression and their implications.**

Furthermore, the research identified several challenges faced by digital content creators. **One of the issues highlighted was hate speech with 32% of respondents reported having experienced it.** Among those targeted by hate speech, most chose to ignore it (31.5%). Only one-fifth (20.4%) reported it to social media platforms. This indicates an area where UNESCO and its partners could provide valuable training for digital content creators on how to effectively address and report hate speech.

Additionally, surveyed digital content creators grappled with ethical dilemmas surrounding sponsored content. Only half of the creators surveyed clearly disclose their sponsors, donors, or funding sources to their audiences. In the interviews, many explained how they struggled to balance transparency with the interests of their sponsors.

**The results of this study indicate a pressing need for training and support for digital content creators.** Indeed, most digital content creators reported not belonging to professional associations and lacking guidance in their content creation efforts. Respondents to the survey expressed interest in taking UNESCO’s free online course designed to equip participants with media and information literacy skills and knowledge. By leading efforts to promote the establishment of global standards for digital content creators and providing sustained capacity-building training, UNESCO can effectively support content creators whose work often transcends national boundaries.



# 1 – Background and Context

## 1.1. Digital Content Creators and Their Role as Opinion Leaders for Their Community

**Digital content creators are reshaping the way information is curated and disseminated in unprecedented ways.** Whether they engage millions of followers or focus on niche communities, these influential voices are increasingly reaching global audiences, especially younger generations who are using less and less traditional media for their news.

Despite their expanding outreach, many digital content creators who work independently face significant challenges including the lack of institutional support, guidance, and recognition. **While digital content creators enrich the information landscape with unique and diverse perspectives, concerns about the reliability and quality of their content are growing,** highlighting the need for a more comprehensive understanding of their impact on the digital information ecosystem.

Recognizing the substantial influence that digital content creators have over public opinion, trends, and consumer behaviour, UNESCO has identified a critical gap in comprehensive research regarding their motivations, skills, and accountability mechanisms. Without insights into their intentions, values, and practices, it is difficult to grasp the full implications of their work. **As the UN agency dedicated to protecting and promoting freedom of expression, access to information, and media and information literacy, UNESCO has taken proactive steps to explore these dynamics through this global study which aims to delve into the motivations, practices, and challenges of digital content creators.** By analyzing these factors, UNESCO seeks to develop a framework that not only acknowledges the contributions of content creators but also equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to uphold high standards of integrity and trustworthiness.

The research findings have informed UNESCO's online course **"Digital Content Creators and Journalists: How to Be a Trusted Voice Online"** developed in partnership with the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas (Austin, Texas, USA), and which aims at empowering digital content creators and journalists with media and information literacy skills.

Ultimately, these efforts align with UNESCO's mission to foster inclusive, informed and sustainable societies, ensuring that digital content creators can thrive while contributing positively to the information landscape.

## 1.2. Research Objectives

- Understand the motivations of digital content creators in preparing their content and their choice of platforms for disseminating content;
- Identify content creators' needs for training and interest in participation in the media and information literacy programme offered by UNESCO;
- Assess digital content creators' media and information literacy skills and content creation practices, especially in brand sponsorship and how they handle mis- and disinformation;
- Explore digital content creators' knowledge of the international standards on freedom of expression, their skills to address harmful online content, their contributions to the digital information ecosystem, and their relationship with digital platforms and traditional media.

In this study, **'digital content creators' are described as people who create content on social platforms (such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram) for public consumption and have at least 1,000 followers.**

The mixed methods project was designed and led by Dr. Louisa Ha of Bowling Green State University, U.S.A. It used an anonymous online survey and in-depth interviews of digital content creators.

## 2 – Main Findings

Most respondents of the survey are under 35 years old and have between 1,000 to 10,000 followers and can be counted as nano-influencers. The most common platforms used among those surveyed are Instagram and Facebook (see Section 5 for details on survey methodology).

### 2.1. Motivations of digital content creators to publish content

When asked about the main motivation to create content on social media, the most common response was sharing knowledge with others (26%), followed by earning income (23.8%) and entertaining others (23.4%). A considerable number of content creators (13.8%) reported expressing their opinions and emotions on a subject as the main reason for creating content (See Figure 1 for all answers).

***“Content creators are not just meant to create things that amuse. More importantly is creating dynamic contents for social change, that for me is the highest and most worthy form of creation whether or not you get paid for it.”***

Abraham Toromade, music nano influencer, Nigeria

**Interviewed digital content creators exhibit a profound sense of purpose in their work.** They are driven by a mission that goes beyond mere content production; they aim to connect with their audience, share valuable insights, and make a meaningful impact in their respective fields. This commitment often reflects their personal values and aspirations as well as a strong sense of social justice, motivating them to create content that resonates deeply with viewers and fosters community engagement.

***“It is my responsibility to tell people where they are safe and what they can do and what they shouldn’t do.”***

Sabeha Almas, journalist content creator, Burka  
Journalists, micro-influencer, Pakistan

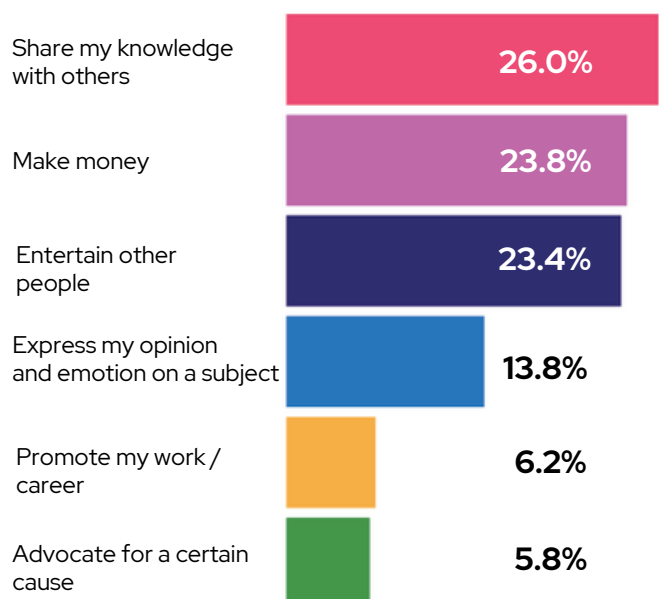
***“Art has always been a passion of mine since I was a child, and I want to use this expertise to inspire others so that they, too, can highlight the wonderful things around them in the world.”***

Faith Sycaoyao, art micro-influencer, USA

***“I chose to use these platforms to bring more visibility to the climate cause, especially to black people, people from the outskirts, and young people... I would say that I am more of an activist than a creator. It is a way to bring more visibility to the cause.”***

Amanda da Cruz Costa, micro-Influencer, Brazil

Figure 1  
Main motivations to Create Public Content on Social Media



Although digital content creators are usually also called influencers, 12% of those surveyed do not consider themselves as influential on their audience. Most of them (69.4%) think they are sometimes influential on their audience. Only 18.6% considered themselves always influential on their audience.

### Revenue of surveyed digital content creators

**Only 31.4% of digital content creators report digital content creation itself as their main source of income.** Surveyed digital content creators have multiple sources of income including advertising revenue sharing from platforms (average=21%) as the most important source of revenue, followed by commission from selling products (average= 17%), and brand endorsement or partnership fees (average=14%), subscription fees (average=13%) and others (average=4.3%). A considerable portion of creators (30%) said that digital content creation does not generate any revenue at all.

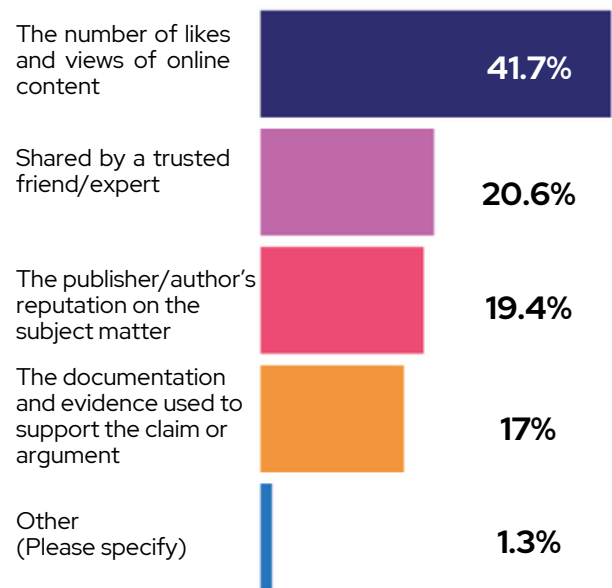
## 2.2. Relation with Trust and Accuracy

**As audiences increasingly turn to digital content creators to access information, the need for creators to prioritize accuracy becomes even more critical.** Misinformation and disinformation can quickly erode trust, leading to skepticism and disengagement from followers. But unlike journalists who are often formally trained to assess sources' credibility and equipped with skills and tools to verify facts, digital content creators often lack formal training in these areas, which can lead to challenges in ensuring the accuracy of their content.

### A. Fact-Checking Processes

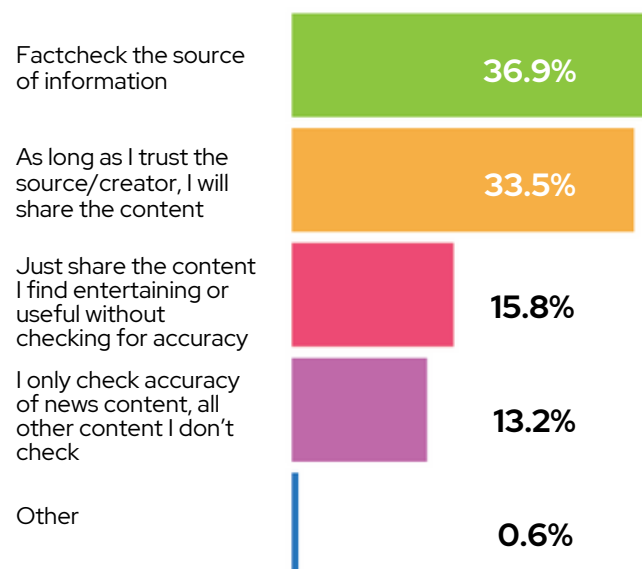
**Surveyed digital content creators mainly use popularity when evaluating the credibility of online sources:** 41.6% use the number of likes and views of the online content as the primary factor to determine online source credibility . Whether the content is shared by their trusted friends or experts is the second most common factor to determine the credibility of online sources (20.6%). The author or publisher's reputation on the subject matter (19.4%) is the third most commonly used factor in determining credibility of online sources. The presence of evidence and documentation in a piece of content is only the fourth-mentioned indicator of credibility (17%).

Figure 2  
Primary Factor Used to Evaluate Credibility of Online Sources



**In terms of sharing content with their audience, the majority (62%) of the surveyed digital content creators admitted to not verifying the accuracy of information before sharing it with their audiences.** About one-third of them (33.5%) reported that would share content without checking if they trusted the source or creator.

Figure 3  
Primary Factor Used to Evaluate Credibility of Online Sources



**Over one third of creators (36.9%) reported checking the content before dissemination.** Some interviewed participants emphasized the importance of accuracy and credibility in their work and recognized the potential consequences of sharing unverified information.

Mia Dávila Romero, a fashion and lifestyle nano-influencer in Peru, explained how she verifies her source:

***“Cross-checking between media, people, brands, or trusted sources is key.”***

Mia Dávila Romero, fashion and lifestyle nano-influencer in Peru

Ushe Chamboko, a current affairs micro-influencer in South Africa, stated how he will handle misinformation on his account,

***“If we post something which is erroneous... [we] would do a follow up on the story and notify our followers and flag the story. We will tell them this story is fake. We don’t take it down because wanted [it] to be an example... We update our followers.”***

It is noteworthy that a majority of digital content creators (68.7%) believe they promote critical thinking and digital literacy among their audiences, even though a large proportion of surveyed creators reportedly do not conduct thorough fact-checking and evaluation of sources.

### B. Sources Used to Create Content

We asked the digital content creators about the sources they use to create their content. **The most common source reported is personal experience/encounter (58.1%)** followed by their own research and interviews with people knowledgeable about the subject (38.7%).

Mega-influencer ZHANG Zhaoyuan in China is proud of using personal experience as he sees it as “objective life,”

***“Everything I post is based entirely on materials drawn from my own life experiences.”***

Mainstream news media ties with online non-mainstream media sources as the third most common source (36.9%). On average, surveyed digital content creators use three types of sources to create their content. They generally do not use official sources, such as government-issued policy documents and websites. This can be particularly problematic in times of crisis as it may result in the spread of misinformation, causing confusion and panic among the public.

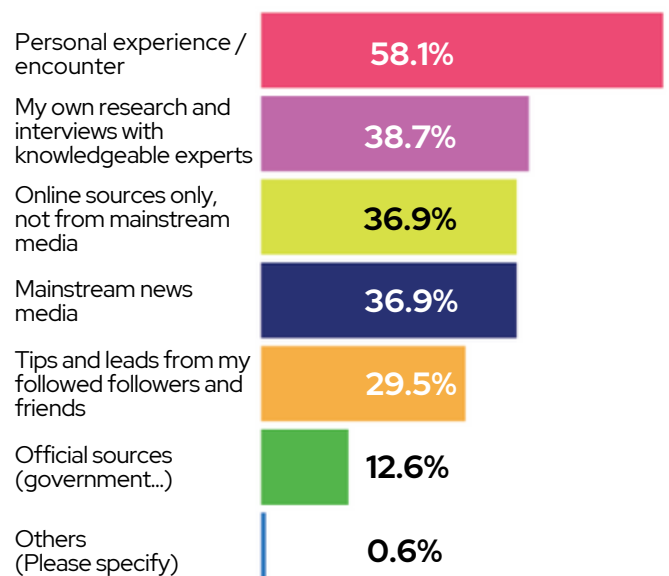
Kassy Cho, a UK journalist micro-influencer, explained her use of mainstream media sources:

***“So, a lot of times we’ll be looking to mainstream media just to understand like what is going on around the world...we’ll just use them as sort of like a starting point.”***

Paulina Nekongo in Namibia saw online sources especially artificial intelligence, a great help and source of information:

***“I would say I use AI applications to develop my content. But it’s something that I will say... it makes you lazy...”***

Figure 4  
**Sources Used by Digital Content Creators**  
(Multiple Responses Total > 100%)



## 2.3. Knowledge of International Standards and Legal Frameworks

### A. International Standards

About 41.2% of the content creators reported they know the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19 which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." More than one-third have heard about it but don't know the rights. About one-fifth have never heard about it. Therefore, greater efforts are required to promote international standards of freedom of expression among content creators.

Those who reported that they do not know the UN international standards such as an anonymized US public broadcast station creator, explained her state of knowledge in an interview,

*"Yeah, I was being honest, and I couldn't if you'd ask me, give you 3 of them [international standards]. I couldn't, so I assume I kind of have a good idea of what they are, but I don't actually know."*

### B. Legal Frameworks

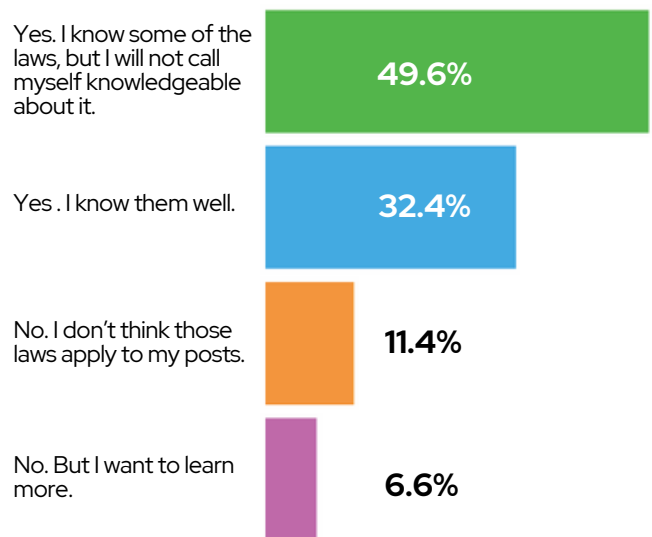
Most of the content creators (82%) are familiar with at least some laws related to freedom of expression, defamation, and copyright in their country. About a third (32.4%) reported having a thorough understanding of these laws, and almost half said they have a partial knowledge of the laws but would not consider themselves as knowledgeable. Laws on freedom of expression play a crucial role in the collective right to exercise the right to express opinions, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Given their key role as disseminators of information, especially in online spaces, digital content creators must have a comprehensive understanding of laws governing freedom of expression and access to information.

Interestingly, about 11.4% of the content creators do not think the laws governing freedom of expression, defamation and copyright would apply to the content they produce and share.

Huma Abbasi, a micro-influencer, did not feel the content regulations in Pakistan are clear to her,

*"We have many ordinances here... with the content on national media, mainstream or social media. But I don't feel them very useful...they are not even very clear about their sections and articles."*

Figure 5  
Digital Content Creators' Knowledge of Laws Related to Content Creation in Their Own Country



When asked if they are aware of the existence of regulations for digital content creators in their country, more than one-quarter (27%) of the digital content creator respondents are unaware of their existence. It is essential that content creators promote freedom of expression for all, whilst being aware of existing regulations on topics including data protection, privacy, consumer protection, and political advertising, among others.

## 2.3. Challenges encountered by Digital Content Creator

### A. Ethical Dilemmas

Surveyed digital content creators frequently encounter a variety of ethical dilemmas, ranging from navigating copyright infringement to balancing sensational and fact-based reporting.



They must also ensure their content does not perpetuate stereotypes or harm already marginalized communities. The challenge of balancing authenticity with commercial interests adds another layer of complexity to their ethical considerations. **About one-third (35.2%) of the digital content creators in our survey admitted they encountered ethical dilemmas while creating content.** Some content creators express uncertainty and concern regarding the potential reactions to their posts or the possibility of making errors, as lamented by MA Chenze, automotive creator, macro-influencer, China.

*“Sometimes, I think [posting on] the Internet is just a gamble. You never know when something might suddenly go wrong.”*

Some creators such as Faithfulness Joshua, a financial creator, nano-influencer in Kenya, face dilemmas about whether to accept endorsements from companies they do not use:

*“Definitely I have encountered ethical dilemmas. For instance, with my financial markets focus [people ask me] which companies you do invest in...these brands have reached out to me, and the fact that I don’t use a certain brand, then I would not recommend it to other users.”*

## B. Hate Speech Experience

**About a third (32.3%) of surveyed digital content creators reported being targeted by hate speech.** Among them, the most common response was to ignore the issue (31.5%), followed by reporting the case to the social media platform (20.4%).

ZHANG Zhaoyuan, a vlog mega-influencer in China, expressed his frustration on the platform’s practice and the severe impact of targeted hate speech on social media:

*“I am also experiencing some online harassment now, though I’ve grown used to it over time...But when I report these issues, the platform asked me to provide evidence that is impossible for me to obtain legally, so they just don’t handle it. Meanwhile, the unverified content that has been posted about me has already impacted my life.”*

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*“Instagram is a nightmare... they don’t see hate speech because it’s an algorithm. It’s difficult to talk to a person. It’s the algorithm that decides.”*

Clara Avebuck, a micro-influencer, Brazil

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**Empowering digital content creators to be more resilient is essential in today’s digital landscape where harmful content can easily spread.** By providing them with the tools, resources, and education needed to recognize and address such content, we can create a more responsible and informed creator community and a healthier online environment for all users.

## C. Views on Sponsored Content

**52.6% of surveyed content creators actively engage in creating sponsored content or endorsing brands and products.** This statistic highlights a significant gap between the perceived prevalence of influencer partnerships and the reality faced by many digital content creators.

Among those who create sponsored content or endorse products, the most frequently cited method for disclosing sponsorships is the use of disclaimer labels, such as “sponsored content” or “brand partnership” (58.9%). Almost half directly disclose their sponsorships in their posts or the videos (46.8%). Still, there are few sponsored content creators who do not disclose sponsorships and simply present their content as if it were unsponsored (7.2%). **About one-third (30%) of the creators only recommend products they use and openly communicate this to their audiences.**

This highlights a significant need for standardizing disclosure practices in influencer marketing as Ushé Chomoko, a micro-influencer in South Africa, advocated:

***“If you’re being sponsored, you need to be out in the open, unless the sponsor is controversial, or unless you’re trying to hide something.”***

### D. Evaluation of Social Media Platform Practices and Community Standards

The relationship between digital content creators and social media platforms is inherently dependent, as creators rely on these platforms to reach their audiences and share their work. In turn, social media platforms depend on digital content creators to generate engaging content that attracts users and drives traffic. **This symbiotic relationship means that changes in platform algorithms or policies can significantly impact creators’ visibility and success, while changes in creators’ content can shape the platform’s culture and user experience.**

Two-thirds of the survey respondents (67.8%) agreed that the platforms on which they create content provide clear content guidelines. Respondents felt that the social media platforms have an appropriate level of content moderation (64.6%), technical support assistance to content creators (65.9%) and sufficient security management (69.3%).

## 2.5. Existing Support to Digital Content Creators

### A. Training and Resources

Only slightly more than half of the surveyed digital content creators (56.4%) are aware of any media and information literacy resources or training programmes designed for them. Most importantly, only 13.9% of those who are aware of the media and information literacy programmes participated in any of them.

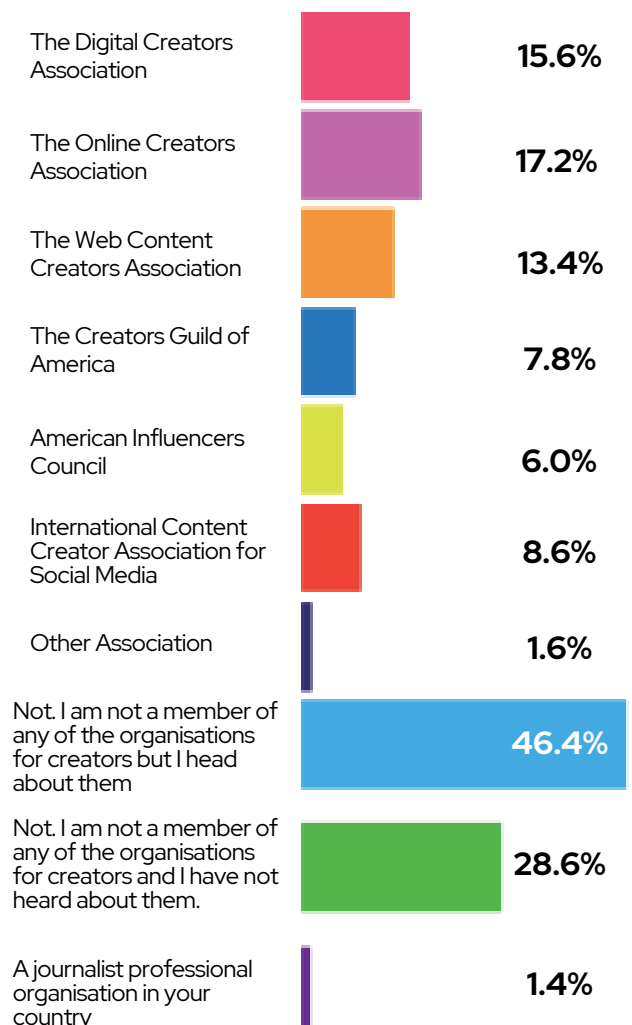
When asked about media and information literacy programmes they had participated in, no single programme was attended by more than one respondent. This shows the need for a globally recognized capacity-building programme for content creators as their content shapes public discourse and access to information across borders in an increasingly digital world.

### B. Syndicates / Professional Associations

Usually, professional associations provide resources, standards, and professional codes of ethics for their members. When given a list of content creator related associations, almost a fifth (19.8%) of the content creators were not aware of them. **About 85% of surveyed content creators do not belong to any creators’ association.**

The most common associations creators are part of are Online Creators Association (17.2%), Digital Creators Association (15.6%), Web Content Creators Association (13.4%) and International Content Creator Association for Social Media (13.4%).

Figure 6  
**Digital Content Creators’ Membership in Professional Associations**



A vast majority of content creators (73.7%) are interested in a free online training course on ethical practices and freedom of expression standards on online content creation offered by UNESCO.

*“It would be great if UNESCO could offer a course to help creators understand the standards and rules and how to create aligned, meaningful content.”*

Mia Davila Romero, fashion nano-influencer, Peru.

The most common reason why content creators are not interested in a course is that they are too busy to spend time on it (50.7%), followed by ‘they don’t think the program is useful to them’ (27.7%) and ‘don’t think the course will apply to their situation’ (25.4%).

*“Content creators face several challenges, including navigating misinformation, maintaining authenticity and managing mental health due to public scrutiny...”*

*UNESCO can help by providing accessible resources and training on media literacy, ethical content creation, and mental health support tailored for creators.*

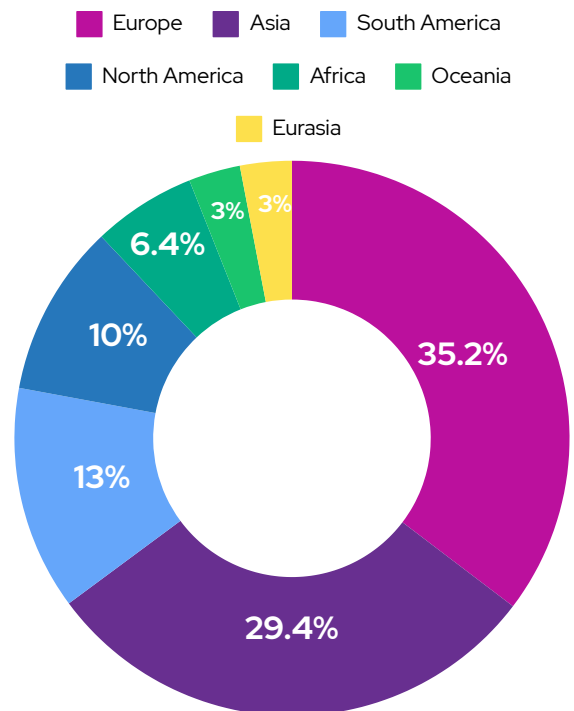
Faith Sycayao, art micro-influencer, USA

## 3 – About the Surveyed Digital Content Creators

### 3.1. Geographic Distribution

Out of the surveyed content creators, over half reside in Europe (35.2%) or Asia (29.4%). About a quarter reside in South America (13%) and North America (10%), followed by 6.4% in Africa, 3% in Oceania, and 3% in Eurasia

Figure 7  
Continent Distribution of Digital Content Creators



### 3.2. Demographics of Surveyed Digital Content Creators

#### Most Content Creators are Under Age 35

More than half of the digital content creators (52.8%) in our survey are under 35 years old, with 25–34 years old as the largest group (33.4%). The second largest age group of digital content creators is 35–44 years old (28.4%).

### A Considerable Portion of Content Creators are Ethnic Minorities in their Country

27.5% of content creators reported belonging to an ethnic minority group in their current country of residence.

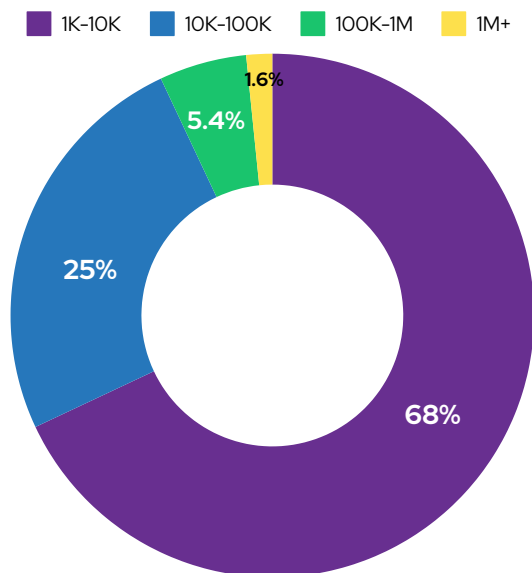
### Educational Background and Experience of Content Creators

In general, most digital content creators have a high education level: 68% have a bachelor's degree or above. Only 13.6% have a high school or below education. Most content creators responding to our survey have created public content for 1-3 years (45.2%). About 36% have been creating content for between 3 to 10 years. Many fewer digital content creators have more than 10 years of experience (6.6%). There are also brand-new content creators (12.2%) who have only created public content for less than one year.

### Most Content Creators Surveyed are Nano-Influencers

A majority of our survey respondents (68 %) are nano-influencers with only 1,000 to 10,000 followers. One-quarter of them (25%) are micro-influencers with 10,000 to 100,000 followers. About 5.4% are macro-influencers with more than 100,000 to a million followers. Only 1.6% of respondents are mega influencers with more than 1 million followers.

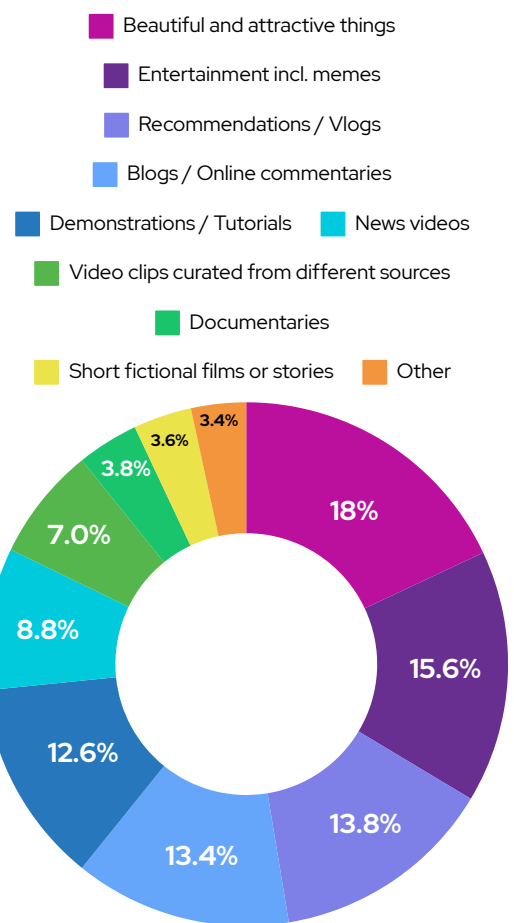
Figure 8  
Digital Content Creators' Follower Size



### 3.3. Content Formats and Genres

These creators use diverse content formats and genres. The most common primary types of format used are beautiful and attractive things (18%), entertainment including memes (15.6%), recommendation / vlogs (13.8%), demonstrations / tutorials (12.6%), news videos (8.8%), video curation (7%), documentaries (3.8%), short fictional films and stories (3.8%).

Figure 9  
Type of Content Formats of Digital Content Creators

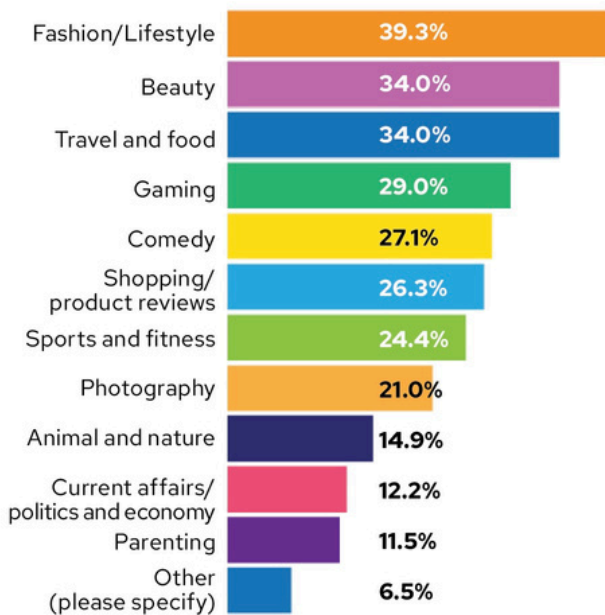


While their content formats are diverse, the content genre of creators is even more diverse, ranging from fashion and lifestyle (39.3%), travel and food (34%), beauty (34%), gaming (29%), comedy (27.1%), shopping/product reviews (26.3%) sports and fitness (24.4%), photography (21%), animals and nature (14.9%), among others.



Figure 10

**Content Genre of Digital Content Creators**  
(Multiple responses, total > 100%)

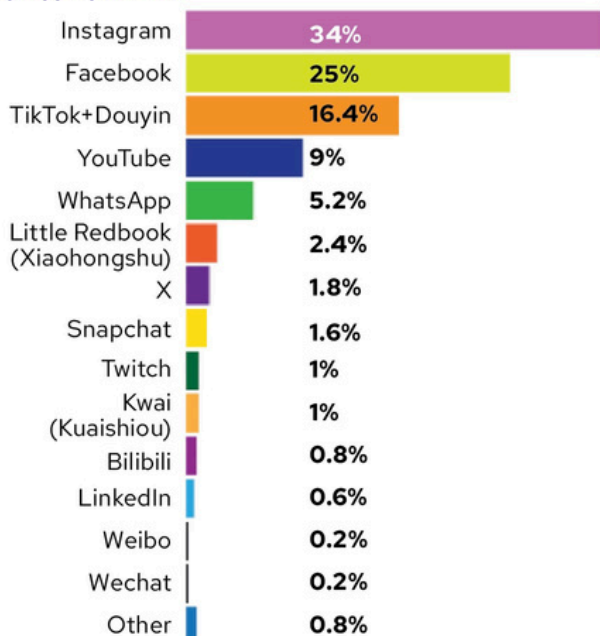


### 3.4. Social Media Platform Uses

Among the content creator respondents, Instagram is the most popular primary social media platform for posting public content (34%), followed by Facebook (25%). Video-based social media platforms such as TikTok and its China counterpart Douyin (16.4%) ranked as the third most popular platform, and Youtube was ranked fourth (9%).

Figure 11

**Main Social Media Platform to Post Public Content**



## 4 - Conclusion

The findings from the global study “Behind The Screens” underscore a pressing need for **enhanced media and information literacy education among digital content creators worldwide**. The low prevalence of fact-checking among content creators highlights their vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation. Moreover, without critical thinking skills, these creators may fall prey to manipulation by various entities, including governments and brands, potentially compromising their authenticity and the integrity of the content they produce. These risks can significantly impact public discourse and undermine the trust that audiences place in them.

The challenges faced by content creators are compounded by a lack of awareness regarding international standards and legal frameworks. This gap not only hinders their ability to responsibly navigate the complexities of content creation but also exposes them to potential legal repercussions. **Strengthening media and information literacy training, particularly with the support of organisations like UNESCO, digital content creators can become allies and defenders of freedom of expression.**

Encouragingly, the interest expressed by creators in free online training opportunities indicates a willingness to improve their skills and knowledge. This enthusiasm presents a unique opportunity to foster a community of informed creators who prioritize information integrity. **By investing in comprehensive training programs, UNESCO can cultivate a generation of content creators who not only understand the importance of fact-checking and ethical standards but also contribute positively to the digital information landscape.**

**UNESCO’s role could be pivotal in promoting and supporting the establishing of global professional standards** – especially since many creators lack affiliation with and support of professional associations – and in fostering a culture of self-regulation so digital content creators can enhance their credibility and build trust with their audiences. By integrating accountability measures into their training, we can ensure that these actors are equipped not only to produce reliable content but also to actively contribute to a healthier digital information landscape.

**In today’s increasingly blurred media landscape, UNESCO believes that stronger cooperation between journalists and content creators is essential.** As the lines between traditional journalism and digital content creation continue to fade, both groups have much to learn from one another. By fostering collaboration, we can enhance the quality of information shared online and collectively address challenges while building trust with audiences in the digital space.

## 5 – Annex: Research Methods

The definition of content creators in this study is people who create content on social media for public consumption and have over 1,000 followers (threshold of nano-influencers used in the influencer industry). This research project employed a sequential mixed methods design to study content creators.

The research project materials and procedures received the approval of the Institutional Review Board of Bowling Green State University to ensure their compliance with the research ethics standards set by the U.S. Federal Government.

### 5.1. Online Survey

The first phase included an anonymous online survey of 500 adult content creators from around the world in 8 languages. The country selection was grouped by language and economic development (Global South and Global North). As English is the most common second language with the widest reach, English-speaking countries had a larger sample size than other languages.

The questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into other languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish). A quota sample was employed to reflect the content creators in the world (See Figure 12). The cross-national online survey company, Qualtrics, was commissioned to conduct the survey among 500 content creators from their worldwide panel. The participants who were eligible for the study would receive compensation from Qualtrics based on its standard compensation scheme.

To ensure equal gender participation, a 50/50 quota was set. The English version of the survey was launched late August 2024. The other language versions were translated within two weeks after confirmation of the English questionnaire and available online by mid- September 2024. The questionnaires were originally written in English and professionally translated by the Shanghai International Studies University Language Department's faculty and graduate students and then were double-checked by another native speaker researcher and approved by UNESCO staff. The questions remained consistent across all languages except for the Chinese version added the social media plat-forms unique to China such as Bilibili, Weibo, Wechat, Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) and Douyin (China version of TikTok).

Figure 12  
Quota Sample by Language Region



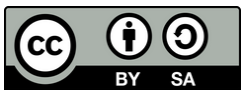
### 5.2. In-depth Interviews

Twenty participants were selected for in-depth interviews from a separate pool of 66 qualified UNESCO contacts and members of professional journalist organisations who also filled out the survey but with contact information. The selection was based on diverse representation in age, gender, content creation experience, information literacy skills, interest in UNESCO's programme, content genre, region, and follower size. The selected in-depth interview participants were contacted by the trained interviewers from the Bowling Green State University Global Social Media Research Lab members and affiliates who have been certified for Human Subjects research.

The interviews were conducted on Zoom in the language of the interviewee's choice and lasted 30 minutes to one hour. Participants received the interview questions in advance before giving consent to the interview. They signed a written consent form or indicated their oral consent during the recorded interview.

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