

# **Creative Freedom in the Digital Age: Is the Internet Turning Us Into Active Creators or Passive Consumers?**

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## **Abstract**

With the arrival of the Internet to the media landscape, the masses now have the opportunity to share their creative endeavours on a massive scale. This has given rise to media platforms based around user-generated content (UGC), giving platform users the opportunity to not only consume media content, but create it also. The question remains however: has mass culture managed to move on from passive consumption towards an active and engaged relationship with the media? How much have the creative freedoms of the Internet been constrained and influenced by traditional mass media such as television? And to what extent are commercial ideologies preventing a truly inclusive and participatory mass culture?

Web 2.0 is doing a great deal to encourage formerly passive audiences to become active participants in digital media. The growing prevalence of commercial platforms based on user-generated content have empowered users to express their creativity and voice their opinions in a democratic way. These platforms give users the opportunity to showcase their creative projects and build communities of interest around the content that they produce. Platform owners use this content to attract audienceship in order to extract value, primarily through advertising. However, the interests of commercial platform owners and its users are not necessarily compatible. When the sheer growth of these platforms results in an abundance of media content, audienceship becomes the limiting factor in the value-chain. This can influence platform owners to design user interfaces that shape the participatory behaviour of users in order to favour more passive modes of consumption.