

YouTube Feature Tells Video Creators When and Where a Clip Is Being Watched

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In a move to provide better data to its users, YouTube formally announced late Wednesday that it had added a free feature that will show video creators when and where viewers are watching their videos. With this, the company hopes to turn YouTube from an online video site into a place where marketers can test their messages, Tracy Chan, YouTube product manager, said.

This program, called YouTube Insight, provides a detailed view of a video's popularity, both over time and geographically, broken down by state. (Internationally, YouTube Insight is not as insightful, providing only popularity by country.)

YouTube has provided basic analytical information to creators of videos since its introduction, including the number of views, the viewers' ratings of the video, and the number of comments left. Advertisers received a slightly more sophisticated summary.

With the Insight information, video creators can dig into the specifics of a video's performance and find, for example, that it peaks on Fridays in winter months, or it has taken several weeks to get traction — information that can help better promote their work. The information, presented as a color-coded map and a graph of a video's popularity, is accessible through a link from a video creator's account page on YouTube. The company will update the data once a day.

But it is likely that marketers rather than casual users will be clamoring for these tools the most. YouTube executives suggest that marketers can use the tools in several ways. A movie studio might run several versions of a trailer to see what is catching on where, and if a humorous spot is catching fire in Texas, might start running that trailer as a TV ad in the state.

A political campaign could test spots of a candidate discussing the environment or the economy; if an environmental spot is popular in Pennsylvania, that might help decide what the candidate stumps about there.

During a YouTube test of the feature, a band uploaded its music performances, determined which states it was popular in via Insight, and planned a tour around that.

"Effectively, YouTube has become an ad-effectiveness, or an insight-effectiveness, tool," Mr. Chan said.

In a couple of weeks, Mr. Chan says, YouTube will start providing even more information, showing video creators where their viewers have come from, whether it is Google, which owns Youtube, or a link on Gawker.

"YouTube has millions of viewers every single day, and has become the world's largest focus group," Mr. Chan said.

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