

# Travel Documentaries in the Digital World: Exploring Culture, Nature, and Society Through the Lens

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## Abstract

In recent years, the creation of digital media platforms has been very instrumental in changing the way that documentaries are produced and travel stories are told. YouTube has been one of the platforms that has empowered individual creators to create and share travel documentaries to audiences around the world. Young digital creators have become self-reliant, no longer dependent on television networks or production houses to tell their stories; instead, they utilise their available technologies: DSLR cameras, drones and digital editing software to share their travel experiences and cultural narratives. The research paper discusses how young YouTube travel content creators are transforming the nature of travel documentaries by showcasing the various cultural aspects through their creative visual lens. The research paper brings out how these creators record the Indian art forms, festivals, dance traditions, food culture, nature and rural living, and at the same time inform and create awareness among viewers. The study has a qualitative content analysis approach and will concentrate on purposively sampled YouTube channels such as Kanishka Gupta, Ajay Raj, Sidharth Joshi, Nishant Parmar, and documentary festival coverage by National Geographic India. It is found that these creators merge cinematic plotting, immersive images, and cultural content to create documentary-like travel videos that serve as informal education sources to the audience. The results also indicate that the travel creators are struggling with financial sustainability, the dependence on algorithms, the travel logistics, and the ability to sustain the quality of production despite their success and technical skills. The paper concludes that the travel documentaries on YouTube are a new form of online cultural storytelling that allows young filmmakers to become storytellers, documentary filmmakers, as well as cultural brokers in the new digital media environment.

**Keywords:** Travel Documentary, Visual Content, Cultural Representation, Cultural Narratives, New Media

## Introduction

Documentary production and distribution have been greatly disrupted by the emergence of digital media technologies. Historically, travel documentaries were the works of recognised media houses like television stations, movie studios, or documentary production centers. These works were costly in terms of monetary investment, technical skill and institutional facilities. Nevertheless, with the emergence of social media and the creation of websites that allow people to share videos, media production has become more democratic, and anyone can produce and share documentary content without any obstacles.

Since its creation in 2005, YouTube is one of the most powerful mediums of video-telling stories. The site enables the creators to post videos, which may be watched by millions of users all over the world without any use of conventional broadcasting media. Consequently, there are new breeds of digital storytellers who have produced travel documentaries that merge personal accounts, cultural immersion and movie scenes.

Youtube travel content has greatly developed beyond the use of travel diaries or casual vlogging. Most of the creators have made systematic travel documentaries which delve into the culture, social, and environmental life of destinations. They capture images of traditional art, indigenous people, local foods, festivals, sceneries and daily life in various areas through the use of their camera lenses.

In India, there is a great abundance of opportunities in terms of the variety in cultures, languages, traditions, and geographical landscapes, which makes the storytelling about travel an indisputable possibility. The young creators have been progressively recording the far-flung villages, tribes, and other unknown places that barely feature in the mainstream press. This paper focuses on the work of chosen digital documentary storytellers of YouTube in the category of travel creators.

## Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis to examine travel documentary content produced by selected YouTube creators. Qualitative analysis is particularly suitable for media research as it allows the researcher to interpret narrative structures, visual storytelling techniques, and cultural representations present within audiovisual content.

The research uses purposive sampling to select prominent travel YouTube channels that focus on cultural exploration and documentary-style storytelling. The selected creators have substantial subscriber bases and have produced multiple videos that explore various aspects of Indian culture, traditions, and landscapes.

Approximately thirty videos from these channels were analyzed. The videos were examined in terms of narrative style, visual aesthetics, cultural themes, and audience engagement. Particular attention was given to how creators portray art forms, festivals, food traditions, and rural lifestyles.

## Kanishka Gupta: Cinematic Cultural Storytelling

The qualitative content analysis method is used in this study to analyse the content of travel documentaries created by the chosen YouTube creators. Qualitative analysis is indeed appropriate in the context of media research because it can enable the researcher to read narrative patterns, visual narration and cultural images that exist within audiovisual media.



**Figure 1** YouTube profile of creator Kanishk Gupta

The study employs purposive sampling to choose the high-profile travel YouTube channels that do not reveal themselves as sponsored by any commercial entity but rather feature a documentary tone to their content. The chosen creators have large numbers of subscribers and have already created several videos that address different topics related to Indian culture, traditions, and scenery.

About thirty videos on these channels were evaluated. The videos were analysed in terms of style of narration, visual style, cultural topics, and viewer interaction. Special care was taken in terms of the depiction of creators on the art forms, festivals, food traditions and the rural way of life. Kanishka Gupta is one of the youngest creators of travel documentaries to be mentioned in the list of the most popular products on YouTube. The channel has a large following of over 1.82 million subscribers and over one hundred videos, and this shows that the channel has a strong audience base, which is interested in exploring different cultures and tourists seeking knowledge about it.



**Figure 2** Covering different cultures, regions, and society

The work by Kanishka Gupta tends to be cinematic in its writing about travelling. The videos are composed of a combination of high-quality camera work, well-thought-out shots, and a storyline that is told in the form of a professional documentary work. The artist also often visits distant areas, historic places, and other culturally valuable places in India.

Among the peculiar features of the work by Kanishka Gupta, the focus on the narrative conveyed by visual means should be mentioned. In the videos, one can see drone shots, landscape shots, and close-ups of cultural life very often. By these visual methods, the artist is able to capture the ambience of places and offer viewers an excellent experience of travelling.

The other significant feature of the channel is that it is concentrated on the cultural narrative. Numerous films record the traditional arts, regional festivals and community practices. The artist usually engages in contact with the locals, craftsmen and entertainers in order to communicate to them the cultural values of these customs.

These aspects make the videos more of a cultural narrative rather than a mere travel record which informs the audience on the heritage and cultural practices in the area.

### National Geographic India: Professional Festival Documentation

National Geographic India is an example of a professional attitude to the production of travel documentaries in the digital media. Inasmuch as the channel is owned by a well-established media company, its presence on YouTube enables it to access both digital audiences and individual creators.



**Figure 3 YouTube Profile of National Geographic India**

The channel has created some videos about major cultural festivals taking place in India such as the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and the Durga Puja festivals in West Bengal. These documentaries give an elaborate pictorial documentation of cultural practices, artistic performance, and community festivals in relation to these festivals.

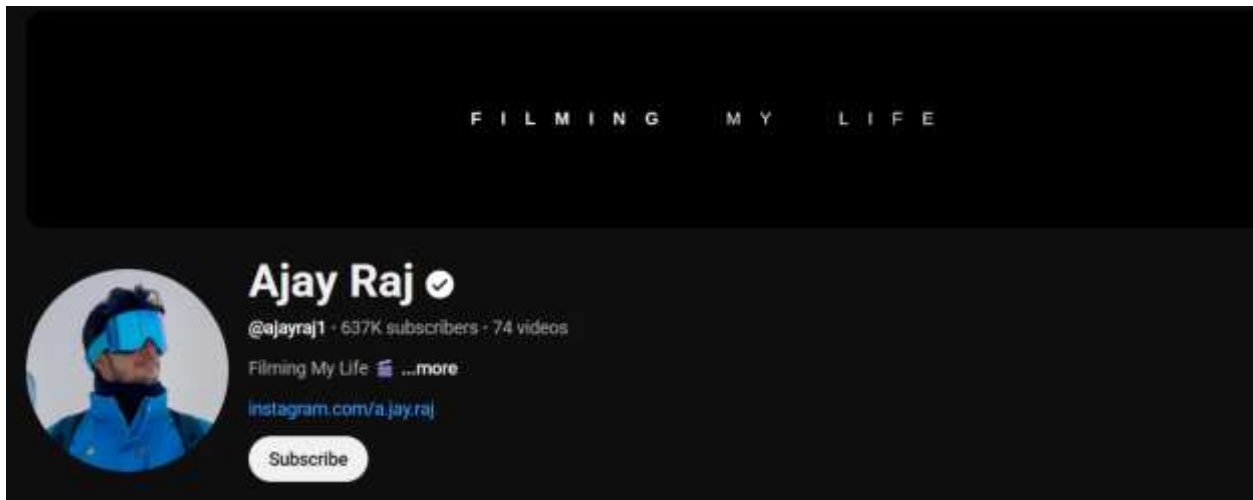
The Hornbill Festival documentaries bring to focus the rich culture of the northeastern states of India. With visual storytelling, the videos feature the tribal dance performance, the traditional music, handicrafts, and culinary traditions. These types of documentaries can ultimately help to showcase cultural practices that are not usually well represented in the mainstream media.

In the same vein, the Durga Puja documentaries would provide an artistic and religious meaning of one of the biggest cultural festivals in India. With the help of interviews, shots of the making of idols and celebrations of the festivals, the videos give the viewers an insight on the cultural and spiritual aspects of the festival.

The documentaries by National Geographic India illustrate the effectiveness of the professional methods of storytelling in documenting the cultural traditions and the high standards of production at the same time.

### Ajay Raj: Youthful Travel Narratives and Destination Exploration

The next prominent travel content creator to be mentioned is Ajay Raj, whose YouTube channel has become very popular, with almost 673,000 subscribers. The channel has over eighteen videos that have already been viewed by millions of people, and this means that there is a large amount of engagement among the audience.



**Figure 4 YouTube profile of creator Ajay Raj**

The content created by Ajay Raj is more centred on travel exploration and destination narration. The videos frequently capture scenic scenery, historical and cultural places throughout India. Ajay Raj has a more conversational and experiential style of telling stories, unlike highly scripted documentaries. Such a style of narration enables the audience to visit the places via the journey of the creator himself. The videos often incorporate live chat with local residents, visit to local markets and capture of local cuisines. The visual narration also is laid stress by the author using ad hoc camera work, traveling montages, and film editing. These factors make interesting travel stories which appeal to the younger generation who are keen on travelling.

Despite the light and entertaining nature of the videos, they remain useful sources of cultural information since they focus on the practices of locals, food habits, and the way people live.

### **Sidharth Joshi: Travelling the Coastal and Island landscapes in India.**

The travel channel by Sidharth Joshi is another aspect of telling travel documentaries. Having around 169,000 subscribers and over one hundred videos, the channel is committed to the exploration of India in terms of its coastal regions, islands, and natural scenery.



**Figure 5 YouTube profile of creator Sidharth Joshi**

The aesthetic created by the author tends to focus on the exploration of the environment and geographic variety. Most of the videos capture the coastal environments, island life, and sea cultures that are seldom

covered by mainstream tourist media.

The aesthetic concerning the natural environments and landscapes can also be observed in the visual storytelling style in the videos by Sidharth Joshi. Drone shots of the coast, views underwater, and overall landscapes of island horizons make the visual events so immersive to the audience.

The other significant feature of the channel is the discovery of the coastal people and their culture. The videos often record fishing customs, marine cultures and food cultures in the coastal areas.

The creator uses such documentation to emphasise the association between the natural environments and the local communities.

### **Nishant Parmar: Recording Rural and Remote India.**

The YouTube channel created by Nishant Parmar can be viewed as a valuable insight into rural and remote parts of India. The creator, with some 128,000 subscribers and over twenty videos, specialises in the travels of less popular locations and smaller communities.



**Figure 6 YouTube profile of Nishant Parmar**

Contrary to many other travel creators, who visit tourist destinations that are usually popular and frequented, Nishant Parmar frequently goes to the rural areas and destinations with more cultural significance that do not feature much in the mainstream tourism press. The videos often show the local traditions, village life, and native cultural practices.

The narration style employed by the artist focuses on human relationships and social life. The videos depict the real life of the rural areas by interacting with the residents, artisans, and farmers.

This type of travel record has helped to sensitise rural cultures and the old way of life. It also helps the audience to enjoy the cultural diversity that exists outside urban centres and tourist destinations.

### **Aesthetics and Visual Quality and Technology.**

The high technical quality of the independent creators could be regarded as one of the specific features of modern YouTube travel documentaries. The development of digital technology has ensured that professional filmmaking equipment is available to people.

In the vast majority of instances examined in this paper, the creators rely on the use of high-resolution cameras, drones, stabilisers, and professional editing software to create aesthetically pleasing content. Aerial shots, slow-motion shots, and colour contrasts are cinematic devices that increase the visual appeal of travel fiction.

These are technical aspects that help make the audience interested. Visual storytelling not only deals with

the beauty of destinations but also adds the emotional attachment between the audience and the story.

### **Educational and cultural influence.**

Travel documentaries on YouTube usually act as an informal source of education. Through the documentation of art forms, dance, festivals and food cultures, creators expose audiences to various cultural practices.

Such videos are the basis upon which many viewers want to know more about destinations, traditions, and cultural heritage. These documentaries can also be accessed by people around the world with the help of the accessibility of YouTube and, thus, foster cross-cultural knowledge.

Moreover, the videos can be used in preserving the culture digitally since they will capture their traditions which might not have much coverage in the media.

### **Issues that Travel Content Creators Face**

The success and increased influence of travel content creators do not exclude the fact that they are experiencing multiple challenges in their work maintenance. Financial sustainability is one of the biggest issues. Travel filmmaking involves high investments in equipment, transportation and production costs. Algorithms' addiction to digital platforms is another issue. Exposure on YouTube relies greatly on the recommendation algorithms that dictate which videos get more exposure.

Another problem that travel creators encounter during filming in far-off areas is logistical problems. Matters like transportation challenges, weather and language can complicate the production processes. Moreover, to be able to record communities and traditions ethically, creators have to be culturally sensitive.

### **Conclusion**

The advent of travel documentaries on the YouTube channel is a major change in the sphere of media creation and narration. Young digital producers are rebranding the genre, integrating a combination of cinematic imagery, first-person stories, and cultural discovery.

Independent media producers like Kanishka Gupta, Ajay Raj, Sidharth Joshi, and Nishant Parmar show how media producers can, using digital platforms, document various dimensions of Indian culture and geography. Their video clips also emphasise arts, festivals, food, way of life in rural areas, and natural environment, and hence promotion of cultural awareness and tourism.

Despite the issues of financial sustainability and platform dependence that these creators have to deal with, their work demonstrates the increased possibilities of digital media as a documentary narration and cultural recording tool.

The future research can also investigate the influence of travel documentaries on tourism growth, cultural conservation, and digital media habits.

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