What makes a trend

Human truths behind the Top 5 YouTube trends
What are millions of people choosing to watch on the world’s largest video platform?

And what is it that makes these videos so popular?

Here, we look at the top 5 YouTube trends from the last year and the human truths that are driving them.
Some of 2021’s most successful videos were follow-ups to top-viewed videos.

Our Grandfather Story’s "Can Ask Meh?" series answers tough questions from its 286K subscribers. Now in its fifth season, the most popular episode has 2M views, topping the first episode’s view count by over 3X.
If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it

The success of sequels reveals how viewers are taking comfort in familiarity, particularly amid times of uncertainty.

Once viewers are invested in content they love, they begin to actively seek out more of the same.
Live streams are mainstream

Creators are using live streams to connect with their audiences in real time, making cultural moments a communal affair.

Malam Seram connects with his 253K subscribers by live streaming the spookiest stories they submit. His most popular live stream in 2021 has 212K views.
You don’t need big budgets or intricate scripts to captivate audiences. The popularity of live streams shows that viewers are placing value on authentic and immediate content that reflects real life.
Once a subculture, gaming is now undeniably pop culture. The first half of 2021 saw over 800B gaming-related views on YouTube.¹

BrandonTan91 spares no effort when it comes to producing Pokémon GO gameplay videos for his 534K subscribers, even traveling to other countries to meet local Pokémon trainers. His most popular video in 2021 has 1.1M views.

¹ Source: YouTube data, Global, H2 2021
WHAT WE LEARNED:

Create shared experiences to bring people closer

Gaming is more than holding a controller — it’s joining a community.

Digital audiences seek content they can relate to and tribes they can align with, and gaming pop culture provides a colorful backdrop for diverse storytelling and engaging experiences.
YouTube is now an established podcast destination, buoyed by greater demand for audio content and multisensory experiences.

Known for its open dialogues and honest discussions, The Daily Ketchup Podcast has garnered over 3M views and 31K subscribers in just one year. Its most popular episode has 147K views.
The rise of video podcasts shows how viewers are seeking to build deeper connections with the content and creators they care about.

Providing behind-the-scenes access can help to establish virtual proximity for viewers, while offering creators and brands an opportunity to show a different or more intimate side of themselves.
Short and sweet

Is reality more captivating than fiction? Millions of people seem to think so.

Singapore dentist Tristan Peh uses Shorts to share his dental knowledge in an accessible way. His channel has over 1.49M subscribers and 1.4B views.

Top creators are tapping into the quick, informal aspect of Shorts to spotlight the humor and relatability of daily life.
It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it

Regardless of themes or topics, this year’s most popular Shorts had one thing in common: they were relatable.

Today’s viewers are looking for content that is unfiltered and unpretentious.
Explore more examples from other APAC markets here.