

Videos



Moving image content is part of the standard in science communication. Researchers and institutions that don't have decent video content and aren't represented on YouTube today are simply not up to date. People's media behaviour has changed significantly over the past two decades. Among 14- to 29-year-olds living in Germany in 2021, 59 per cent use video platforms such as YouTube frequently or very frequently ^[34] to obtain information about science. This makes it the number one channel within this group. Other video-based social media channels are currently reinforcing this trend. If people want to gain a rudimentary understanding of how a particle accelerator works or how to fight viruses, they look for information on the web – and sometimes directly on the websites of relevant institutions such as CERN or the WHO. If a suitable, often internally produced video clip is found there, it is readily clicked on. It promises to summarise the most important information in a reasonably entertaining way. The term “edutainment” applies to video formats perfectly.

Of course, there are not only good videos – there are also terribly bad ones. Worse still, there are very well-made videos that distort facts and deliberately misinform. These videos are highly problematic when they encounter a credulous audience. As serious players in science communication, there is not much we can do about this except to produce even better videos and counter them.

It is often said that a video should not be longer than two minutes, otherwise no one will watch it. This is utter nonsense! If people are really interested in something, they may spend days reading a book about it or watching an hour-long documentary. The idea that science communication must always work in tiny chunks is misleading. But it makes perfect sense to reduce the amount of information, to focus and to allow for cognitive connectivity. Content must be presented purposefully. Structuring a story in the

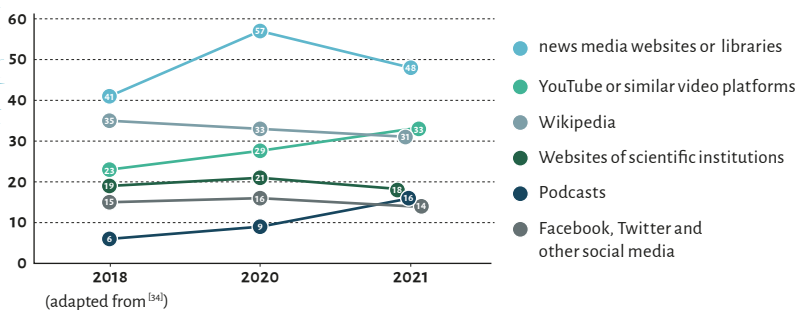
right way is good work. Sometimes two minutes is enough for a video clip highlighting a research project or presenting a new science institution. Other times, you give it 15 minutes, or even more.

And, of course, there are some technical challenges to in-house video production, even though more and more people are gaining experience of using mobile phones for it or even small video drones. There is a reason why professional video productions are often produced with teams of three or more experts (camera, editing, etc.): the quality improves. But unfortunately also the price. Producing nice material with a small budget is an art. Feel free to try it yourself. But be aware that there's a fine line between sympathetic authenticity and image-damaging clumsiness. But if you have good video material, use it! Don't hide it in the far recesses of your website. Link it to other media, such as via QR codes in brochures or on posters. Use your social media channels to promote it.

Last but not least: Good video footage of scientists presenting themselves and their work is an excellent way to attract the attention of journalists, who – especially if they work for TV – look for experts who are comfortable in front of a microphone and a camera.

Use of online channels for **INFORMATION on science and research**

Results from the German Wissenschaftsbarameter 2021



Recommended reads:

- ♦ Hayes R. & Grossman D. (2006), *A scientist's guide to talking with the media*, Chapter 5: Mastering the interview. Rutgers University Press. ISBN 978-0813538587
- ♦ von Campenhausen J. (2014), *Wissenschaft vermitteln*, Kapitel 12: Wissenschaftler ins Fernsehen, Springer Fachmedien. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19361-8>