

Le Monde engages new, younger audiences by experimenting with new digital video formats

A French news media group created in 1944, Le Monde's publications include newspapers, magazines, digital news services, and books.

OPPORTUNITY

Le Monde wanted to reach new, younger audiences who didn't read their website or newspaper. They sought to leverage new digital video formats to connect with this audience, whilst staying true to their editorial identity and expectations of current audiences.

APPROACH

To engage new audiences, Le Monde first built up digital video capabilities by investing in equipment and personnel, and restructuring their teams. This included:

- **Hiring** a motion designer and fact-checking specialist.
- **Restructuring** existing teams so that two editors were dedicated to experimenting with video formats and working with external motion designers.
- **Purchasing** a DSLR camera, microphone, and graphics tablet to aid in digital video content creation.
- **Updating** content for an international market (e.g., adding subtitles).

With a robust digital video structure in place, Le Monde then moved on to testing new made-for-YouTube formats, with a focus on how video length and audience interaction might drive engagement. Previously, they had produced primarily short breaking news videos, but longer, in-depth videos were more in keeping with the brand identity of Le Monde — a respected, established news outlet. To test this, Le Monde developed:

A longer-form, bi-monthly video series, "Les Décodeurs," based on the popular section of their website dedicated to debunking false news reports. A result of the collaboration between the fact-checking and video teams, the show balances serious topics with light-hearted production values to appeal to a younger audience while maintaining the Le Monde brand. They chose a younger presenter, who is lively and quirky while still being a subject matter expert — since launch, he's grown a significant fan base, and is a recognizable face for Le Monde at festivals and creator events.

Two new longer-form series with topics aimed at younger audiences: "Chercheuses d'étoiles" explores how four female astrophysicists revolutionized the way we see space, and "Rap Business" investigates how rap culture has taken over the world.

Le Monde also wanted to tap into the audience engagement opportunities that YouTube provides. To do this, they:

Tested a new format, the "Mappemonde" series, which explains world events using maps. Topics for each episode are decided by the audience, and voted on using the poll feature in YouTube Community posts.

Attended YouTube creator events, like Frames Festival, to showcase their work and connect with other YouTube personalities for potential future collaborations.

RESULTS

By testing new formats and methods of viewer participation, Le Monde have succeeded in increasing engagement with new and existing audiences.

- **Doubled subscriber numbers** within 12 months.
- **Generated 6M views and over 300K hours of watch time** for "Les Décodeurs" within five months.
- **Over 120K views** for each episode of "Chercheuses d'étoiles."
- **The first episode of "Mappemonde" has generated over 350K views**, the second over 750K views, and the third (released just over a month ago) already has over 770K views.

LEARNINGS

Quality and originality trump quantity: Finding your own, unique voice and brand on YouTube will help you tell stories that resonate — much more so than just pumping out content on a daily basis. Invest the time and resources needed to showcase original stories in a polished way. Audiences will associate your brand with quality and gravitate to your channel.

Points for presentation: Invest in your digital design as much as your storytelling. Catchy thumbnails and titles are a key way to get an audience to click through and watch a video. Le Monde found that thumbnails with faces in them performed particularly well. With titles, it's important to speak the language of your audience, so use tools to identify trends and SEO searches to find keywords that are popular with viewers.

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Continuing our growth on YouTube to reach more people with quality content is, of course, our main ambition. We hope that the video team becomes a key department at Le Monde, with a reputation for producing highly innovative content.

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