

Humour vs Informational Content on YouTube: A Mixed Method Study of Audience Engagement

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Abstract

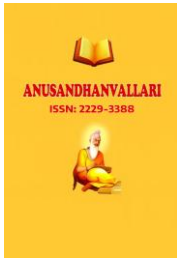
This paper investigates the relationship between humour and audience engagement in YouTube content with a relative focus on humorous and the informational communication styles. In today's world of the digital media, YouTube creators are rapidly combining humour, storytelling and information to maintain the audience's attention and improve their engagement rate overall. This report's goal is to understand how humour influences the viewer's interaction, attention retention, relatability and creator loyalty among the newer and young audiences consuming the long-form YouTube content. A mixed method research design was used for this report. The primary data was collected by a structured online survey distributed among people aged from 18–27 who actively consume YouTube content. A total of 104 valid responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to examine relationships between humour related engagement variables and audience retention variables. The statistical technique was selected due to the ordinal nature of the Likert-scale survey data and the non-parametric characteristics of the data. The results indicate that humour positively influences audience engagement, attention retention and revisitation behaviour. A statistically significant moderate positive correlation was found between humour based engagement and memory retention (Spearman's $\rho = .533$, $p < .001$), suggesting that audiences who showed stronger engagement with humorous content also tend to show higher retention and recall and another significant positive correlation was found between humour driven interaction and creator loyalty (Spearman's $\rho = .464$, $p < .001$), indicating that humorous content may contribute to sustained audience engagement and repeated viewership. This project further explores that audiences prefer a balanced combination of humour and information while purely informational content continues to be perceived as more credible and trustworthy for serious discussions. This concludes that humour functions as an important communication strategy within creator driven digital media ecosystems by enhancing audience engagement without entirely replacing informational value.

Keywords: humour, audience engagement, digital media, and youtube content.

Introduction

In current times YouTube has grown into and as one of the largest video platforms in the world which has helped change how young people in India find both information and entertainment on it. The platform is somewhat in between televisions, blogs, social media and the creators on it are not just performers but also editors, videographers, researchers and brand managers. For the viewers, the difference between watching the news or sitting in a classroom or scrolling through a comedy clip is now much less than it used to be.

This report looks at one specific question inside of that bigger picture, that is when an Indian creator makes any long-form content which keeps the viewer stay, is it humour or the information? as some channels are built almost entirely on jokes and commentary while some are research heavy and look more like documentaries and then comes this third group that sits somewhere in the middle, mixing them both together. This report shows the survey data from 104 participants or viewers and the channel-level analytics from the three different Indian creators



which has a total of upto 265 videos, to actually see which of these approaches actually performs better in both and how people say what they feel about the content and in the numbers their videos generate.

This report is placed as an academic study in the area of digital media and the audience behaviour as it draws on humour theory, communication research and entertainment-education literature which tries to read those frameworks against what's happening on the Indian YouTube these days. The purpose of this report is not to state that humour is better than information or the reverse, but it is to understand how the two interact with each other and separately and what audiences in the 18 to 27 age group seem to want from a creator.

1.1 Background of the Study

The digital content space has shifted a lot in the last few years. The clean line between an informational video and an entertainment video has thinned out. Long-form podcast interviews, commentary essays and creator-led explainers all sit on the same homepage, and the algorithm pushes whichever one is holding viewers in their seats. Creators have responded by mixing styles – a serious topic gets a meme reference, a comedy bit gets a brief detour into a real fact, and the entire package is delivered in a conversational, almost informal tone.

Humour has gradually become a strategic tool inside this environment, not just a flavour. Storytelling jokes, irony, callbacks to internet culture and self-deprecating asides all help a creator hold attention through a forty- or eighty-minute video. Long-form podcast hosts seem to rely on this especially heavily, because audience attention naturally drops off as duration grows. At the same time, informational creators continue to build large audiences by being trusted, well- researched and credible. The result is a content ecosystem with two strong pulls on it, and a question worth asking: which pull is stronger when it comes to actual engagement?

To anchor this study in real data, channel analytics were collected from three Indian creators that sit at different points along the humour-to-information spectrum. Mohak Mangal makes documentary-style and investigative content. Prakhar Gupta hosts a long-form podcast that blends ideas with conversational humour. Saiman Says works in short-form satirical commentary. The 265 videos pulled from their channels run from April 2024 to March 2026 and provide the quantitative backbone of the mixed-method design.

Review Of Literature

Humour in Media Communication

Berger (1993) carried out one of the initial analyses of humour in the field of mass communication. He bickered that humour works as a kind of social lubricant, which lowers audience's defensiveness and opens viewers up to a level for persuasion. Berger noted over 45 different humour techniques used in media like irony, sarcasm, parody, incongruity and many others, and each of which produced different emotional and visible reactions. His work treated humour as a calculated rhetorical strategy rather than just entertainment and this specific framing still travels well into today's YouTube creators in this digital age.

Meyer (2000) after examining humour called it a double edged sword in communication. His study found that humour clearly improves audience's attention and message recall ability but it can also damage the perceived credibility of the speaker if (the speaker) uses it in excess or at the wrong moment or time. His observation is quite relevant to YouTube creators who have to balance entertainment with informational data. It recommends the most effective style is a measured one, where humour is presented into a credible narrative. The channel data in this report gives some empirical texture to that tension, that is, Mohak Mangal (YouTube creator) who uses minimal humour, he retains a credible form of engagement, while Saiman Says (another creator) who maximizes humour gets the maximum engagement among the other creators in this report but is serving a different audience expectation entirely.



Incongruity Theory and Humour Processing

Suls (1972) proposed a two-stage model of how humour gets understood which in fact became the basis of the Incongruity Theory. In this humour is induced when an audience first notices an Incongruity between what they expected and what actually happened and then resolve it through a logical cognitive shift, if applied to YouTube, this explains how creators like Prakhar Gupta use unexpected narrative turns, absurd comparisons and tone changes to create comedic moments in the middle of the conversation. The cognitive effort of inducing incongruity improves attention and memory encoding, which is why humour based content tends to be more memorable than a straight informational delivery.

Martin (2007) extended the Incongruity Theory in his broad view of humour psychology by differentiating between the cognitive styles of humour appreciation. He found that cooperative humour, which builds social connection and self-enhancing humour, which encourages personal resilience are two styles which are most effective in public communication. According to him creators who lean on cooperative humour building which is an in-group bond with their viewers through shared references and relatable observations tend to generate a good amount of sustained engagement and repeated viewership.

Benign Violation Theory

McGraw and Warren (2010) introduced the Benign Violation Theory (BVT) as a framework for why is something perceived as funny. In this, humour arises when a situation simultaneously violates norms, expectations or moral standards and yet is also read as benign or psychologically safe. The dual condition explains why comedic commentary on serious subjects like politics, economics, social inequality, etc., works so well on YouTube. The creator frames an uncomfortable topic in such a way that signals safety to the viewer's mind, which lowers the psychological resistance and lets the audience engage with all the information.

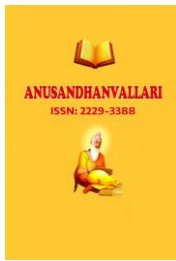
BVT applies directly to both Saiman Says(YouTube creator) and Prakhar Gupta's (also a creator) podcast. Saiman's video titled 'Ajaz Khan and Rajat Dalal: Internet Bullies' is a clean example of serious social phenomena (per se. online intimidation, social media gundagiri) are looked at in a comedic sense and the result is 8,24,272 views with a 7.74% engagement rate. Prakhar Gupta's episode with Samay Raina hits the channel's highest single-episode view count (11.3 million) by applying comedic deflection to sensitive personal narratives – exactly the benign violation pattern McGraw and Warren theorised.

Audience Engagement in Digital Media

Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) developed the Consuming, Contributing and Creating (CCC) framework to map engagement on social media. They identified a hierarchy of engagement behaviours running from passive consumption (watching, reading), through active contribution (commenting, sharing), to co-creation (fan content, remixes). When this framework is applied to YouTube, humorous content disproportionately pulls audiences into the mid- and upper tiers, because the emotional resonance from humour acts as a trigger that gets viewers to leave comments, share videos and create responses of their own.

Humour and Parasocial Relationships on YouTube

Horton and Wohl (1956) originally suggested the idea of parasocial interaction which is the one-sided sense of connection that the audiences develop with media personalities. Many other works have extended this idea to digital creators. Rasmussen (2018) validated that humour is one of the powerful mechanisms for building parasocial bonds on YouTube because it signals informality, authenticity and a certain degree of vulnerability (digitally). Creators who lean on self deprecating humour, casual tones and audience directed jokes generate stronger parasocial bonds as compared to other, which in return transforms into higher watch time, more subscriptions and steady loyalty when the algorithm changes.



Informational Content and Perceived Credibility

Fogg (2003) in his rudimentary work on digital credibility, found that expertise, trustworthiness and presentation quality are three of the primary dimensions of credible source online. He discovered that users connect more with visually organised, reference-heavy and formally presented content with greater credibility, even when the implicit information is not much better than what was presented informally. Translated as per YouTube, this means that informational creators who use structured presentation with data, references and a professional frame seem more authoritative and trustworthy even when their engagement numbers run lower than those creators who prioritise entertainment and relatability.

Flanagin and Metzger (2007) studied that how different audiences evaluate informational credibility online and have found that Gen Zs and millennial users use significantly different credible indicators than the older generations. Younger viewers were seen to weigh the peer validation signals like, shares, likes, comments above the formal markers of authority. The Indian YouTube audiences in the 18 to 27 age bracket, suggests that engagement metrics end up working as credible proxies.

Attention Retention and Entertainment-Education

Singhal and Rogers (1999) created the entertainment education (EE) framework which concluded that embedding informational or educational messages inside of entertaining formats significantly improves both the reach and message retention rate compared to the standard straightforward informational delivery format. Their argument states that the emotional engagement generated by entertainment deepens the visual processing of any given informational content that comes along with it and they named this the entertainment education effect.

Brechman and Purvis (2015) scrutinised the attention patterns in online video and discovered that drop-off in long-form videos correlates highly with perceived relevance and emotional engagement than with content complexity. Their data exhibited that humorous pauses inside of informational content acted as re-engagement hooks and they'd reset the audience's attention and brought the drop-off rate down. This is particularly relevant to Prakhar Gupta's PGX format which religiously holds audiences for 60 to 90 minutes per episode which is a watch length that would be difficult to sustain without periodic comedic re-engagement or humorous pauses in between.

Meme Culture and Shareability in Digital Communication

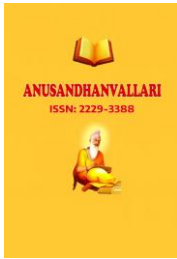
Shifman (2014) in her study of Internet Memes argued that humour-driven content holds a significant advantage in the digital sharing ecosystems because it triggers positive emotional states that users would want to share to or on to their networks. Her analysis presented that content that combines humour with a culturally relevant reference is highly likely to be shared than any other purely emotional or informational content. On YouTube this turns into a measurable advantage that is shared content drives external traffic, signals quality to the recommended person and introduces the creator to newer audiences who would have never found the creator or channel normally.

Gen Z Audiences and Digital Content Preferences

Francis and Hoefel (2018) in their McKinsey report on Gen Zs have identified that authenticity, identity expression and entertainment are the major dominating values shaping the digital habits of people born between and during 1995 and 2010. Their research presented that Gen Z audiences actively distrust formal or corporate communication styles and would prefer creators who come across as normal conversational, occasionally self-deprecating and visibly genuine people. This preference adamantly favours humour infused content over informational content.

Storytelling and Narrative Engagement

GGreen and Brock (2000) proposed the concept of narrative transportation i.e., the idea when the audience gets taken away by a story, their critical faculties relax momentarily and they become more open to certain attitudes



and beliefs that were embedded inside the narrative presented. In their framework humour works as a transportation facilitator and it keeps emotional engagement significantly steadier throughout the story which in return prevents the visual fatigue that might otherwise would have broken the immersion during a long video.

Indian Digital Media and YouTube Creator Ecosystem

Kumar and Gupta (2021) did a content analysis of Indian YouTube channels across categories like commentary, education, comedy and news. They discovered that the channels which involve entertainment with analysis were performing significantly better than informational channels on every engagement metric. Their study inspected over 200 Indian YouTube channels with more than 5,00,000 subscribers and concluded that the fastest-growing category of Indian YouTube consists of edutainment creators (education and entertainment) who use an informal or friendly conversational style with periodic usage of Hindi idioms, cultural references and comedic or sarcastic timing. The data collected for 265 videos of different channels for this report provides direct video level scrutiny for what Kumar and Gupta saw at the level of different channels.

Platform Algorithms and Content Visibility

Convington, Adams and Sargin (2016) their technical paper on YouTube's deep neural network based recommendation system (algorithm basically), revealed that watch time and engagement signals like the comments, like count and shares are the fundamental drivers of content perceivability on the platform. This mechanism just does not reflect audience preferences but it rather actively shapes it by amplifying the content that already shows a higher engagement significantly. This self reinforcing cycle quietly rewards humour based communication strategies because that generates the engagement signals the algorithm reads as quality.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This report uses a Mixed Method Research Design which combines both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects. The quantitative side has two parts, the first one being a structured survey distributed to 104 respondents aged from 18 to 27 and generating a measurable data on the audience preferences, the engagement patterns and perceptions of humorous versus informational content.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the impact of humour on audience engagement on YouTube.
2. To compare audience perceptions of humorous and informational content among viewers aged from and between 18 to 27.
3. To analyze how humour affects attention, attention retention and content interaction in long-form videos on YouTube.
4. To identify and find whether audiences prefer balanced humour plus information content presentation over purely informational ones.

Research Hypotheses

The three hypotheses tested in this report are:



H1: Humour and Audience Engagement

Humour based content generates significantly higher audience engagement on YouTube which is measured through likes, comments, shares and watch time than that of purely informational content.

H2: Humour and Attention Retention

Humour improves audience attention retention during long-form YouTube videos that is reducing viewer drop-off rates and increasing average view duration.

H3: Informational Content and Credibility

Informational content is seen as more trustworthy and credible by the viewers for serious or factual topics even when it generates lower interactive engagement metrics.

Study Design

This study uses a cross sectional design. Data was collected at one point in time from both the survey respondents and the YouTube data analytics. A longitudinal design would have offered some advantages like it could have tracked viewer attitudes over time and tied them to changing channel data but the scope of this project and the quick change of platform dynamics made a cross-sectional research design more adequate.

Study Area

Geographically, this report is set in urban and semi-urban India, with a specific concentration of respondents from metropolitan regions like Delhi, Mumbai, Gurugram, Bengaluru and Kolkata. The urban tilt was pretty obvious as these regions hold the largest share of the total YouTube consumption in India and are home to a younger and a more digitally literate population with affordable data and a lot of smartphone usage. They are also where the bulk of the audience for the three creators in the case study actually lives.

Study Variables

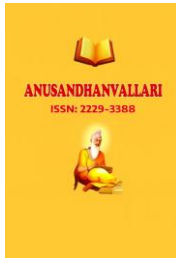
This report works with two broad sets of variables, those captured through the survey and those captured through the YouTube channel analytics.

Survey-Side Variables

- Demographic variables like age group, gender, YouTube viewing frequency, primary device used.
- Content preference variables like the preferred content type, podcast completion likelihood by style of the podcast, attention-grabbing style, trusted style for serious topics, preferred creator style.
- Likert-scale engagement variables, that is, six items measuring agreement with statements about humour, retention, engagement and the credibility.
- Multi-select qualitative variables like the reasons for engaging with humorous content, the barriers to informational content engagement and factors driving the completion of a long podcast.

Channel Analytics Variables

- Per-video metrics which are the video title, the publication date, the duration in seconds, view count, the like count and at last the comment count.
- Computed metrics: engagement rate $((\text{likes} + \text{comments}) / \text{views} * 100)$, like rate $(\text{likes} / \text{views} * 100)$, comment rate $(\text{comments} / \text{views} * 100)$.



Sampling Design

The target population for the survey is YouTube viewers aged from 18 to 27 who regularly watch long-form content on the said platform. This age band was chosen for two reasons first being that it is the most active and digitally engaged demographic on YouTube in India, second being that it includes both the college going students and young working professionals who together make up the core audience for the creators present in this case study.

According to data published by Statista and YouTube's own transparency reports, the 18 to 34 age group accounts for roughly 45% of YouTube's total watch time globally, which makes it the single most important demographic for understanding the platform level audience behaviour. The population is characterised by a higher digital literacy, more frequent switching between platforms and the content formats and a little bit of sophisticated awareness in the creator's communication styles.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected from three sources, which are as follows-

- A structured questionnaire distributed digitally through Google Forms which captured participants demographic profiles, the YouTube consumption habits, their content preferences, the engagement

Data Analysis Techniques

The data was collected and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques and microsoft Excel and Jamovi were used for presenting, cleaning and analysing the whole dataset. These are the tools used-

Percentage Analysis

Percentages were used to find how responses were distributed across different categories and to identify the major response trends in the data.

Frequency Distribution

Frequency distribution tables were prepared in such a way that the responses could be classified systematically and the concentration of responses for each questionnaire item could be read off at a glance.

Mean Score Analysis

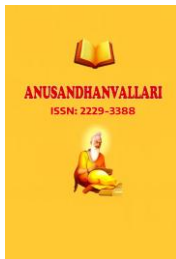
Mean scores were calculated to determine the average level of agreement or disagreement among respondents with each Likert-scale statement in the questionnaire.

Standard Deviation

Standard deviation was used to measure the spread of respondents' perceptions on each Likert item which is essentially how much agreement or disagreement there was revolving around the mean.

Spearman's Rank Correlation

Spearman's Rank Correlation was used because the survey produced ordinal Likert-scale data and the aim was to identify monotonic relationships between humour related and retention related variables. The Spearman's coefficient is appropriate for ordinal data and it doesn't require the assumption of normality that Pearson's coefficient requires which made it the right fit for this project.



Research Instruments

The first tool for the collection of the primary data was a questionnaire that was designed in Google Forms. It used a mix of multiple choice questions, Likert-scale rating items on a from 1 to 5 scale and some opinion based questions. The questionnaire was organised into the following section-

- Section A: Demographic Information which included age group, gender, viewing frequency and the primary device used for viewing.
- Section B: Content Preferences (preferred content type, podcast completion likelihood, attention-grabbing style, trusted style for serious topics, preferred creator style).
- Section C: Likert-Scale Engagement Statements (six items measuring attitudes toward humour in podcasts, retention, engagement and credibility perceptions).
- Section D: Multi-Select Qualitative Items (reasons for engaging with humorous content, barriers to informational content engagement and factors driving completion of long-form videos).

For the channel analytics component the data was collected using the YouTube Data API v3 which provides publicly available video level metrics for any public YouTube channel and its videos respectively. The information collected includes the video duration, the number of views, the like count and total comments for each video uploaded within the research window. The survey responses were recorded in Google Sheets and were exported for analysis.

Reliability Analysis

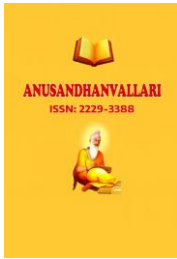
A reliability analysis was done to examine the internal consistency and stability of the Likert- scale questions present in the questionnaire using Jamovi (an open statistical software). Cronbach's Alpha was applied to the variables which measured humour engagement, the memory retention, the humour interaction and creator loyalty respectively. The analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha of the value 0.818 across the questionnaire items for the 104 respondent sample which reveals good internal consistency. In practical aspects this means that the items reliably measured what they were intended to measure that is audience perceptions and engagement related constructs.

Limitations of the Methodology

This methodology has a few limitations that should be conceded that the survey sample size of 104, while being adequate for this project it still limits the precision of the quantitative estimates. Convenience sampling tends to over represent digitally active, college educated urban youth which is usually known as a bias. The cross-sectional design captures preferences at a single moment, which may not reflect the rapidly evolving dynamics of YouTube content consumption. The channel analytics dataset does not include watch time or audience retention curves, both of which would have given a sharper test of Hypothesis 2. And the study is restricted to YouTube – the findings may not generalise directly to Instagram Reels or OTT services.

Analysis And Interpretation

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected through the structured survey questionnaire (N = 104) and the creator channel analytics dataset (265 videos). It is organised as follows: Section 4.1 covers demographic findings; Sections 4.2 to 4.3 present the content preference and Average Mean (Likert-scale) analyses; Section 4.4 covers the qualitative multi-select results; Section 4.5 presents the creator channel analytics; Section 4.6 covers the Correlation analysis; and Section 4.7 covers Regression-style hypothesis testing and interpretation. Throughout



the chapter, the survey- side analysis and the channel-data analysis are read together so that subjective preferences and objective performance numbers can be compared directly.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
22 to 24 years	47	45.2%
18 to 21 years	44	42.3%
25 to 27 years	13	12.5%
Total	104	100%

Age Distribution of Respondents

The age distribution shows that 87.5% of the respondents fall in the 18 to 24 bracket, which is the core audience for long-form Indian YouTube content. The 25 to 27 group is smaller (12.5%) but still present, giving the sample a useful spread across the early-career and final-college-years segments.

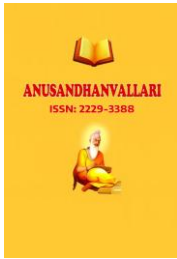
Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	66.3%

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	25	24.0%
Prefer not to say	9	8.7%
Other	1	1.0%
Total	104	100%

Gender Distribution of Respondents

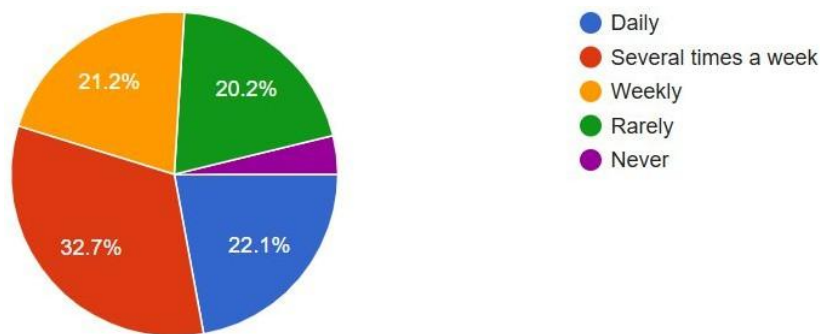
66.3% of the total respondents were Male, whereas 24% only were female, indicating the pattern of over representation of male in long form commentary and informational Youtube audiences in India. However (8.7%) of respondents who didn't prefer to disclose their gender is worth noting as a meaningful share of the sample.



YouTube Viewing Frequency

Viewing Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Several times a week	34	32.7%
Daily	23	22.1%
Weekly	22	21.2%
Rarely	21	20.2%
Never	4	3.8%
Total	104	100%

YouTube Viewing Frequency Among Respondents

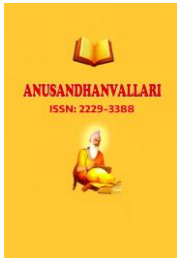


YouTube Viewing Frequency (Survey Data, N = 104)

32.7% view several times a week, (22.1%) watch YouTube daily, (21.2%) watch weekly, that accounts to approx. (76%) of the respondents of this survey watching the YouTube on a frequent basis. Only handful (3.8%) of the respondents never watch YouTube. This indicates that the sample of this study, is a regular Youtube-Viewer sample, which is very appropriate for this study.

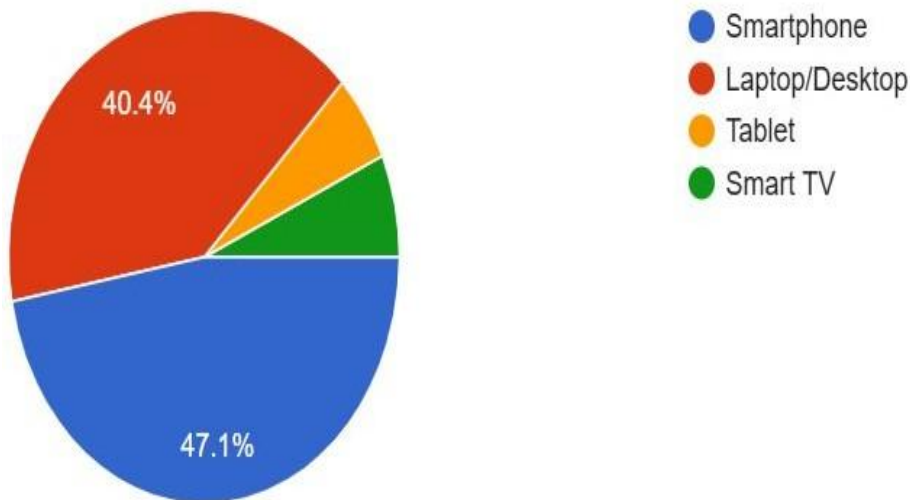
Device Preference

Device	Frequency	Percentage
Smartphone	49	47.1%
Laptop or Desktop	42	40.4%
Smart TV	7	6.7%



Tablet	6	5.8%
Total	104	100%

Primary Device Used for YouTube Consumption



Primary Device Used for YouTube Consumption (N = 104)

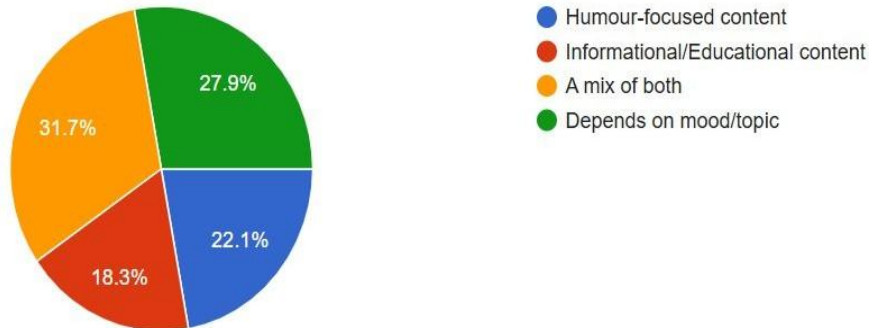
A very balanced response trend is seen here as, (47.1%) of the respondents prefer watching YouTube on their Smartphones, and (40.4%) of the respondents prefer watching YouTube on Laptop or Desktop. This relatively even split, between Phones and Laptops, goes on further to indicate that the sample includes both Mobile viewers and viewers who treat viewing YouTube particularly as a desktop activity, due to the saying that Long-Form content rewards a bigger screen.

Content Preferences

General Content Preferences

Content Type Preference	Frequency	Percentage
A mix of both	33	31.7%
Depends on mood or topic	29	27.9%
Humour-focused content	23	22.1%
Informational or educational content	19	18.3%
Total	104	100%

General Content Type Preference



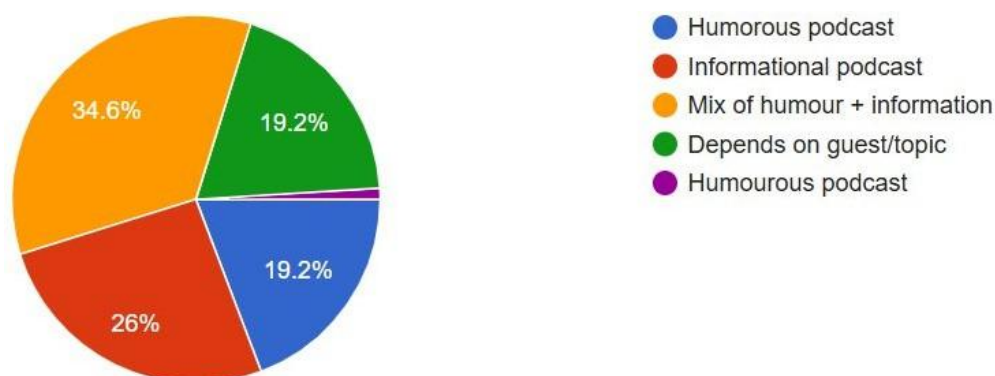
General YouTube Content Type Preference (N = 104)

A combined 81.7% of respondents either prefer content that contains some humour, or choose content based on mood and topic. Only 18.3% prefer purely informational or educational content. This pattern gives early support to the study's central argument that pure informational formats serve a relatively narrow audience segment, while mixed or context-dependent formats appeal to the majority.

Podcast Completion Likelihood

Podcast Type Most Likely to Watch Till End	Frequency	Percentage
Mix of humour and information	36	34.6%
Informational podcast	27	26.0%
Humorous podcast	20	19.2%
Depends on guest or topic	20	19.2%
Humourous podcast (alt. spelling)	1	1.0%
Total	104	100%

Podcast Style Most Likely to Be Watched to Completion



Podcast Style Most Likely to Be Watched to Completion (N = 104)

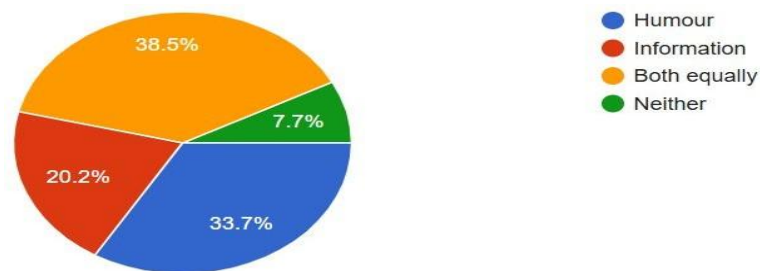


When asked which podcast style they were most likely to finish, 34.6% picked the mix of humour and information. Pure informational podcasts came second at 26.0%, with humorous and topic- dependent picks tied at 19.2% each. The mixed format wins, but the informational option holds up well – the audience is not abandoning information for jokes, it is asking for both.

Attention-Grabbing Style

Style That Grabs Attention Faster	Frequency	Percentage
Both equally	40	38.5%
Humour	35	33.7%
Information	21	20.2%
Neither	8	7.7%
Total	104	100%

Style That Grabs Audience Attention Faster



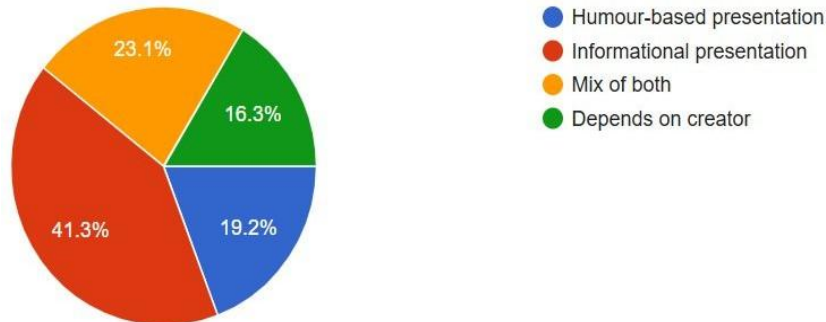
Style That Grabs Audience Attention Faster (N = 104)

A combined 72.2% of respondents say humour either grabs their attention faster on its own (33.7%) or is at least as effective as informational style (38.5% saying both work equally). Only 20.2% find purely informational style to be a faster attention-grabber. This has direct implications for thumbnail design and opening-sequence strategy in YouTube content.

Trust for Serious Topics

Trusted Style for Serious Topics	Frequency	Percentage
Informational presentation	43	41.3%
Mix of both	24	23.1%
Humour-based presentation	20	19.2%
Depends on creator	17	16.3%
Total	104	100%

Preferred Style for Serious or Factual Topics



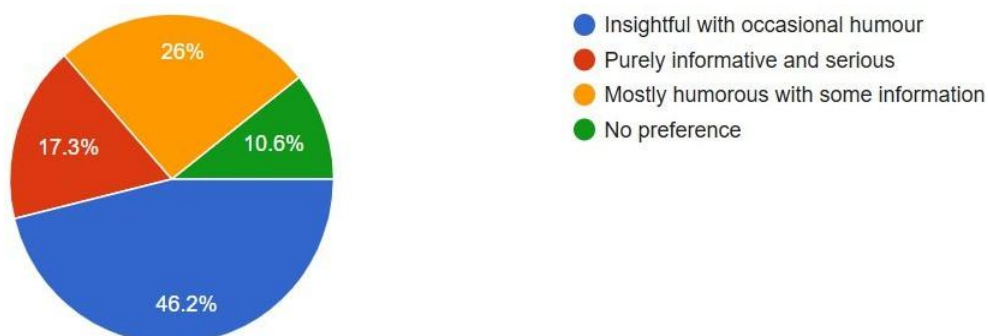
Preferred Style for Serious or Factual Topics (N = 104)

The picture flips when the topic gets serious. Informational presentation is now the most trusted style, picked by (41.3%) of respondents. As we see, a small chunk of only (19.2%) of respondents want Humour Based Presentation for serious topics, however (23.1%) prefer a mix of both the informational and humorous aspect towards watching an informational content. This gets us to a conclusion that the audiences want humorous content for general consumption but informational content for serious aspects, which also supports the H3 in this study.

Preferred Creator Style

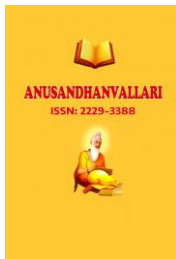
Creator Style Preference	Frequency	Percentage
Insightful with occasional humour	48	46.2%
Mostly humorous with some information	27	26.0%
Purely informative and serious	18	17.3%
No preference	11	10.6%
Total	104	100%

Preferred Creator Communication Style



Preferred Creator Communication Style (N = 104)

Almost half of the respondents of this study i.e. (46.2%) of the respondents prefer creators who present insights



in a way involving occasional humour too. (26%) of the respondents preferred to viewing creator having a humorous edge with some informative attributes. However (17.3%) of respondents want to watch a creator who is purely informative and serious towards the content.

Average Mean: Likert-Scale Engagement Analysis

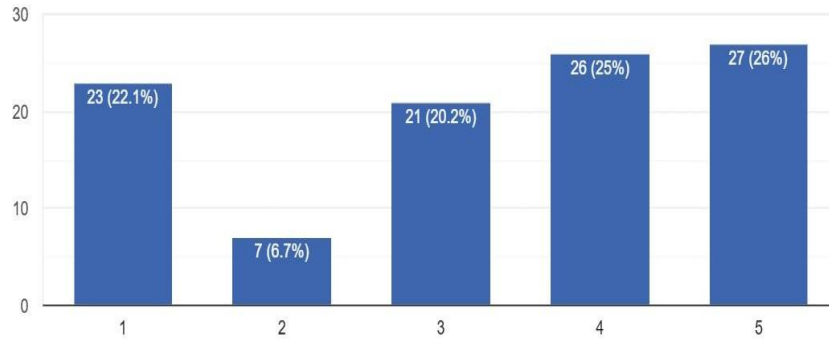
Six Questions in the Questionnaire that involved Likert Scale items were administered on a scale from 1 to 5 i.e. 1 - Strongly Disagree, 5 - Strongly Agree. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and the relevant interpretations are shown below.

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
I remember key points better when humour is used.	3.78	1.16	Supported
Humour helps me stay engaged during long podcasts.	3.73	1.34	Supported
Informational podcasts provide more value than humorous podcasts.	3.73	1.16	Supported
I revisit creators who are entertaining, even if less informative.	3.63	1.14	Supported
I stop watching podcasts that feel too serious or boring.	3.45	1.35	Moderately supported
I am more likely to like, comment or share if it contains humour.	3.26	1.48	Neutral to Supported

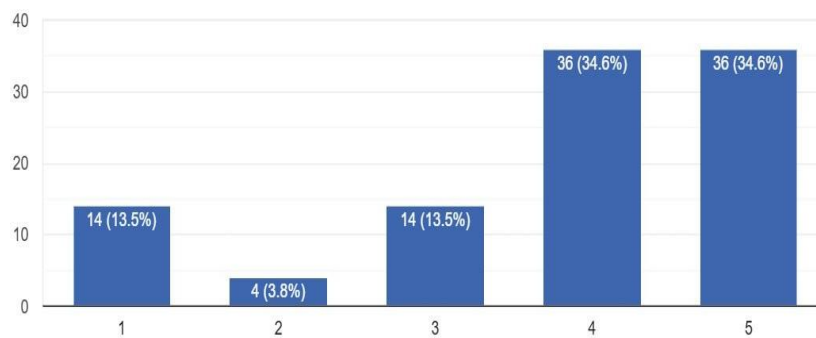
Likert-Scale Engagement Items: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations (N = 104)

Highest mean score here (3.78) was obtained in the item that involved memory retention, i.e. respondents remember the key points better when humour is used. Therefore, consistent with the predictions of Congruity Theory as articulated by Suls (1972) and expanded by Martin (2007).

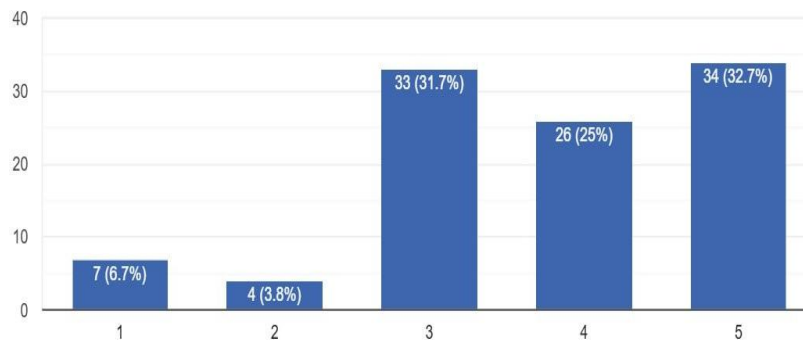
Almost Identical scores were obtained when asked by respondents if humour helps them stay engaged during long podcasts (3.73) and when asked about if informational podcasts is more valuable compared to humorous podcasts (3.73). This further revealed that humour though is functionally variable for retention, but at the same time informational content has its own worth. This duality is the capable anchor for the hybrid format preference that shows up across this study.



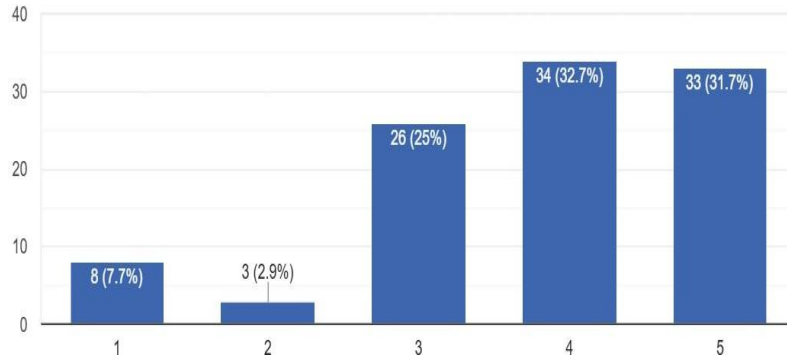
'I am more likely to like / comment / share a podcast if it contains humour' (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)



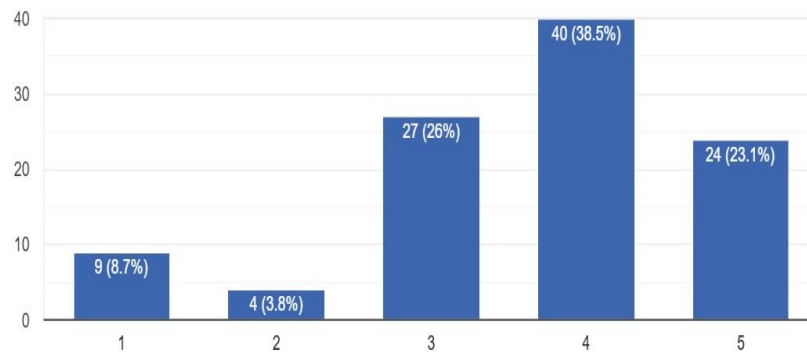
'Humour helps me stay engaged during long podcasts' (1-5 Likert)



'Informational podcasts provide more value than humorous podcasts' (1-5 Likert)



'I remember key points better when humour is used' (1–5 Likert)



'I revisit creators who are entertaining, even if they are less informative' (1–5 Likert)



'I stop watching podcasts that feel too serious or boring' (1–5 Likert)

Key Finding: Memory Enhancement. The single highest-rated Likert item is 'I remember key points better when humour is used' (mean 3.78). This directly supports Hypothesis 2 (Humour and Attention Retention) and lines up

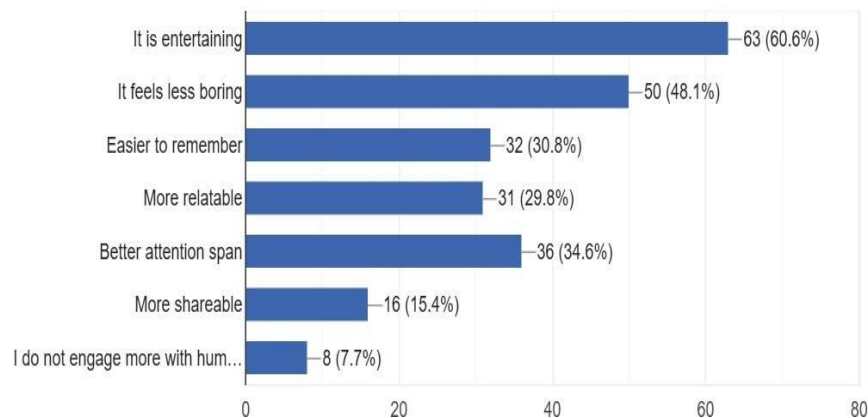
with the Incongruity Theory prediction that the cognitive effort of resolving humour incongruity deepens memory encoding. Creators who integrate humorous anchoring moments into informational content are likely improving not only engagement but also message retention.

Qualitative Multi-Select Analysis

Reasons for Engaging More with Humorous Content

Reason for Engaging with Humorous Content	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
It is entertaining	63	60.6%	1
It feels less boring	50	48.1%	2
Better attention span	36	34.6%	3
Easier to remember	32	30.8%	4
More relatable	31	29.8%	5
More shareable	16	15.4%	6
I do not engage more with humorous content	8	7.7%	7

Table 4.11: Reasons for Engaging More with Humorous Content (Multi-Select, N = 104)



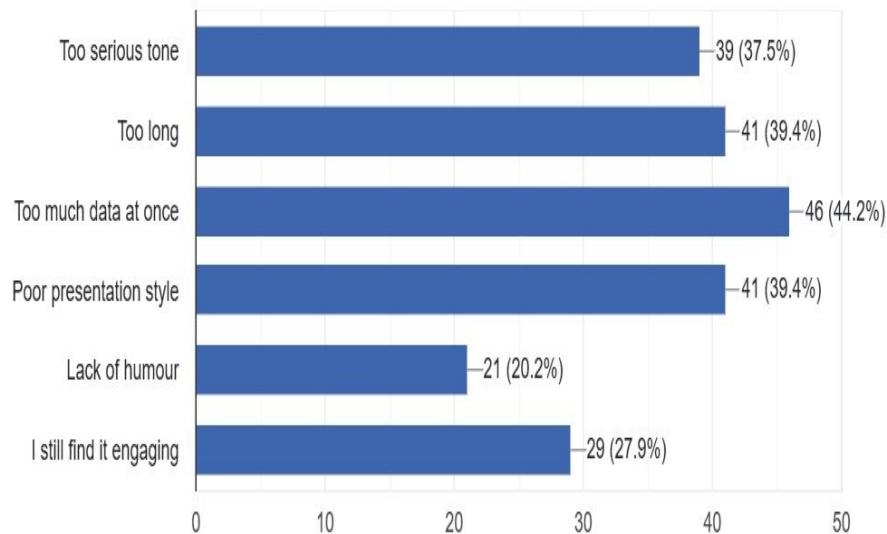
Reasons for Engaging More with Humorous Content (Multi-Select)

In the context of engaging more with the humorous content, (60.6%) of the respondents engage with the humorous content because of its engagement factor. Also (48.1%) of the respondents feel that it is less boring, another extension of why it is entertaining. (34.6%) of the respondents conveyed that better attention span is the reason why they engage with the humorous content. However only (15.4%) of the respondents find it shareable, which indicates and complicates the Shifman (2014) argument in the context of shareability, suggesting that in Indian Context, audiences enjoy watching humorous content privately more frequently than what they share.

What Makes Informational Content Less Engaging

Barrier to Informational Content Engagement	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Too much data at once	46	44.2%	1
Too long	41	39.4%	2
Poor presentation style	41	39.4%	2
Too serious tone	39	37.5%	4
I still find it engaging	29	27.9%	5
Lack of humour	21	20.2%	6

Perceived Barriers to Informational Content Engagement (Multi-Select, N = 104)



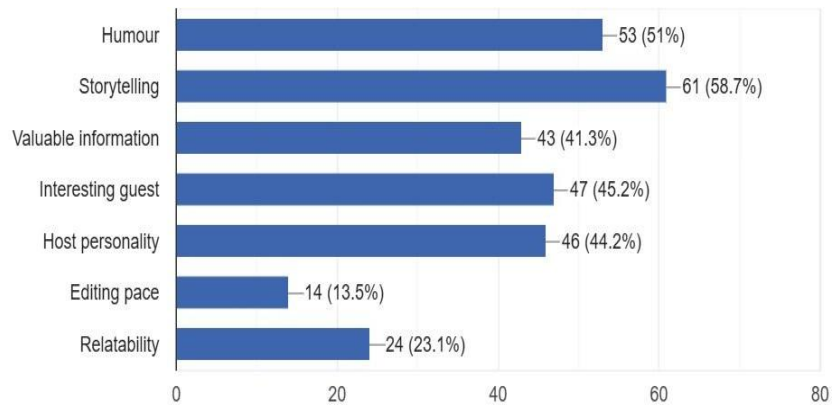
Barriers to Informational Content Engagement (Multi-Select)

When asked about what makes informational content less engaging, Too much Data at once (44.2%) emerged as a significant barrier to the engagement to informational content. It was the identical percentage of respondents who voted, the longer format of the informational content also acts a barrier in the view of engagement to informational content (39.4%) and poor presentation style is one other barrier in this context. (20.2%) of respondents just engage less with the informational content because of the lack of humour in it simply.

Factors Driving Long Podcast Completion

Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Storytelling	61	58.7%	1
Humour	53	51.0%	2
Interesting Guest	47	45.2%	3
Host Personality	46	44.2%	4
Valuable Information	43	41.3%	5
Relatability	24	23.1%	6
Editing Pace	14	13.5%	7

Factors That Make Respondents Continue Watching a Long Podcast (Multi-Select, N = 104)

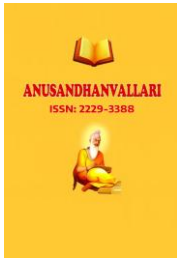


Factors That Drive Continued Viewing of Long Podcasts (Multi-Select)

Storytelling emerges as the most significant factor that makes people complete longer format podcasts (58.7%). (51%) of respondents voted that humour is an attribute in the content that would help them complete longer podcasts. This also lets us know that humour works inside a broader system of following engagement drivers -

1. Narrative Quality
2. Host Charisma
3. Informational Value

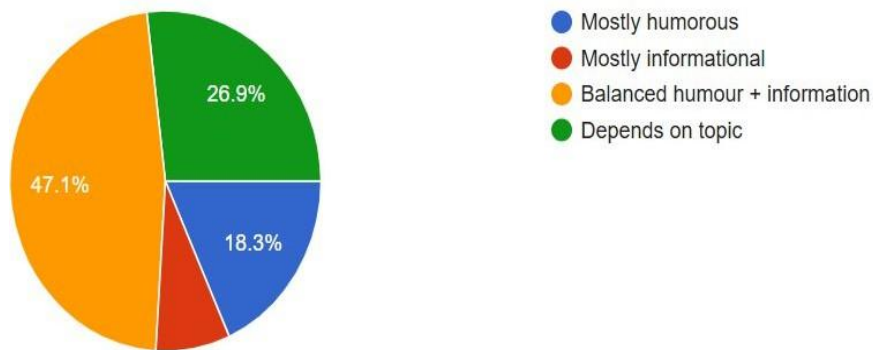
However it is rarely outranked by single factor other than storytelling.



Preferred Podcast Style (Forced Choice)

Podcast Style Preference	Frequency	Percentage
Balanced humour and information	49	47.1%
Depends on topic	28	26.9%
Mostly humorous	19	18.3%
Mostly informational	8	7.7%
Total	104	100%

Preferred Podcast Style (Forced Single Choice)



Preferred Podcast Style – Forced Single Choice (N = 104)

47.1% of respondents prefer to watch podcasts having attributes of both Humour and Information in it showing the interests of people these days to have hybrid preferences over extreme choices. However, 26.9% of respondents depend on the topic for the same. However, 26% of respondents collectively have a bit of extreme choices, either they prefer mostly humorous or mostly informational and nothing in between.

Correlation Analysis

To find about the relationship between humour related engagement variables and audience retention variables the Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient was applied using the open statistical software called Jamovi. Spearman’s coefficient was chosen because the survey used ordinal Likert-scale questions and its aim was to detect monotonic relationships between humour, the engagement, the retention and creator loyalty. The analysis ran on the final sample of 104 responses.

The first correlation-ship test between humour based engagement and audience attention retention was done using two selected Likert items and the analysis showed a significant moderate positive correlation between humour based engagement and memory retention (Spearman’s rho = .533, p < .001), which means that the participants who showed stronger engagement with humorous content also had better attention retention and recalling ability while consuming long-form YouTube videos.



The second correlation-ship test was done between humour driven interaction and creator loyalty, which showed a result that had a significantly moderately positive correlation between humour interaction and revisit behaviour towards the creators channel or videos (Spearman’s rho = .464, $p < .001$). This showed that the participants who’d interact more with humorous content also tend to revisit creators they find entertaining, amusing and engaging.

Relationship	Spearman’s rho	p-value	Interpretation
Humour-based engagement ↔ Memory retention	.533	< .001	erate positive, significant
Humour-driven interaction ↔ Creator loyalty	.464	< .001	erate positive, significant

Spearman’s Rank Correlation Results (N = 104)

The correlation results support the hypothesis that humour contributes positively to audience engagement and helps in sustaining viewer interaction within digital media environments. The findings are pretty consistent with Incongruity Theory which proposes that unexpected and humorous elements increases the audience's attention and visual involvement or retention and with the Benign Violation Theory in which humour appears to create a psychologically comforting and engaging communicational environment for audiences.

Cross-Tabulation: Age Group and Content Preference

An additional cross-tabulation was put to run to see whether the content preferences vary across the different age groups taken in the sample.

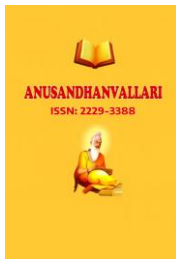
Preference Pattern	18–21 (42.3%)	22–24 (45.2%)	25–27 (12.5%)
Prefer balanced humour + info	50.0%	46.8%	38.5%
Prefer mostly informational	4.5%	8.5%	15.4%
Stop watching boring podcasts (mean)	3.59	3.40	3.23
Trust informational for serious topics	38.6%	42.6%	46.2%

Content Preference Patterns by Age Group

From the above, the participants aged from 18 to 21 show a higher preference for balanced humour and information content (50.0%) and a higher sensitivity to boring content (mean 3.59, against 3.40 for the 22 to 24 group and 3.23 for the 25 to 27 group). The eagerness to engage with purely informational content rises with age which is around 4.5% in the younger group to 15.4% in the older group. The subgroup sizes are too small to support formal statistical info but the directional pattern is pretty consistent with the broader developing literature on media consumption.

Regression and Hypothesis Testing

In addition to the correlation results, a regression style analysis was performed by combining the survey results with the channel analytics findings and then looking at each piece of evidence thoroughly to one of the three



hypotheses assumed. The intention was not to run a multivariate model with the survey variables but the sample size of 104 and the ordinal nature of the data would limit how such a model would tell us, but to bring quantitative survey evidence and channel data together in a structured hypothesis-testing frame.

Looking across both data sources together the survey responses (N = 104) and the creator channel analytics dataset (265 videos) – the three hypotheses can be tested as follows.

Hypothesis	Test Outcome	Evidence
H1: Humour and Active Engagement	Supported	Comedy guests on PGX: 43L avg views vs 6.3L for info guests (6.8×). Saiman Says engagement rate was 7.91% vs Mohak’s 3.60%. Survey - 33.7% say humour grabs attention faster, 72.2% say humour is at least as effective. Correlation rho = .464, p < .001.
H2: Humour and Attention Retention	Strongly Supported	Likert mean 3.78 for memory retention through humour (highest score). 3.73 for humour aiding long podcast engagement. Storytelling was 58.7% and humour was 51% are the top two factors for podcast completion. Correlation rho = .533, p < .001.
H3: Informational Content and Credibility	Strongly Supported	41.3% trust informational presentation for serious topics which is the largest single category. Mohak Mangal generates credible heavy comment patterns despite the lower engagement rates. Likert mean 3.73 for informational podcasts provide more value.

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Detailed Hypothesis Outcomes

H1: Humour and Audience Engagement

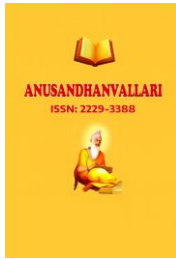
The correlation analysis showed a statistically visible positive relationship between humour interaction and the creator loyalty (Spearman’s rho = .464, p < .001). The channel data alone adds independent support which is around 6.8× views differential between comedy and informational PGX guests, the 4.31 percentage point engagement rate gives advantage to Saiman Says over Mohak Mangal and the within channel humour vs informational split on Mohak’s own videos all point in the same way. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

H2: Humour and Attention Retention

The correlation analysis revealed a significant but statistically moderate positive correlation between humour-based engagement and the memory retention (Spearman’s rho = .533, p < .001). The Likert results added depth- ‘I remember key points better when humour is used’ received the single highest mean score (3.78), and ‘humour helps me stay engaged during long podcasts’ came in close behind (3.73). H2 is henceforth accepted.

H3: Informational Content and Credibility

The descriptive findings from the survey shows that the participants connect informational content with greater credibility and value for serious or important discussions. Informational presentation is the most trusted single style for serious topics and is at 41.3% and the Likert item ‘informational podcasts provide more value than humorous podcasts’ has a mean of 3.73 respectively. The comment section's observational work on Mohak



Mangal's channel adds qualitative weight in viewers and they frequently describe his content as reliable, well researched and trustworthy. H3 is therefore supported by the audience perception analysis

Findings, Conclusion, Suggestions And Limitations

Survey-Based Findings

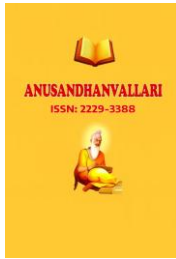
- Humour positively affects audience engagement, with the strongest effects on memory retention (mean 3.78) and sustained watching behaviour (mean 3.73).
- A clear plurality of respondents (47.1%) prefers balanced humour and information formats, with 18.3% preferring mostly humorous content and only 7.7% preferring mostly informational styles.
- Informational content is strongly perceived as more credible and trustworthy for serious topics, with 41.3% trusting informational presentation compared to 19.2% trusting humour-based presentation for such content.
- Humour improves attention retention in long-form videos, as evidenced by both the Likert- scale data (mean 3.78) and the qualitative identification of humorous moments as memorable anchoring points in comment sections.
- Storytelling came out as the single most important driver of long-form podcast completion (58.7%), narrowly ahead of humour (51.0%) and well ahead of valuable information, interesting guests and host personality.
- Correlation analysis showed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between humour-based engagement and memory retention (Spearman's $\rho = .533$, $p < .001$), indicating that humour improves audience attention retention and recall in long-form YouTube content.
- Correlation analysis also showed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between humour interaction and creator loyalty (Spearman's $\rho = .464$, $p < .001$),

Conclusion

This report concludes that humour plays a significant role in improving audience engagement on YouTube while informational content continues to carry authority and educational value, particularly for serious or factual topics but humour adds something distinct attention retention, relatability, emotional involvement and a deeper parasocial bond between creators and their audience. The most effective communication strategy according to the survey data and the channel analytics is the hybrid format that combines substantive informational value with humour and storytelling. This integrated approach hits the dual goal of maximum audience engagement and sustained credibility that neither pure entertainment nor pure information can manage alone.

The empirical anchor for these conclusions is the channel analytics data as it shows the 6.8× view differential between comedy and informational PGX guests.

The findings strongly support the application of Incongruity Theory, Benign Violation Theory and the Entertainment-Education framework in understanding digital audience behaviour on YouTube and they also underline the importance of parasocial relationship mechanisms in building the loyal, engaged audiences that sustain long-form YouTube channels over time.



For the Indian YouTube ecosystem specifically, the report confirms that the fastest-growing and most audience-responsive creators are those who navigate the balance between entertainment and information well using the cultural familiarity, storytelling and strategic humour to make complex or serious content accessible to a young and digitally sophisticated audience.

Suggestions

- Content creators should strategically combine humour with informational value because audiences showed stronger engagement and retention toward balanced communication styles rather than toward either purely serious or purely humorous content.
- Informational creators may improve audience attention and long-form retention by introducing conversational storytelling, relatable humour and interactive presentation within their content.

Future researchers may expand the study by including larger and more diverse groups, multiple social media platforms and comparative analysis between short-form and long-form digital content formats.

- Further studies can be done to explore the long-term impact of humour on audience trust, learning outcomes and parasocial relationships between creators and viewers.
- Digital marketers and brands collaborating with YouTube creators should prioritise engagement-oriented communication strategies that balance entertainment with credibility and informational depth.
- Educators and communication strategists working in digital learning could draw on the entertainment-education framework when designing video content for younger audiences, since the findings here align with that framework's core prediction.

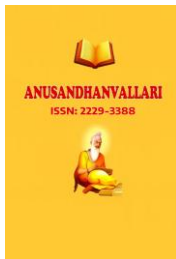
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