

HugoDécrypte experiments with new formats to make news and current affairs more accessible to younger audiences

Started by Hugo Travers in 2015, HugoDécrypte is a YouTube channel that now has over 500k subscribers and presents on a wide variety of topics and stories.

OPPORTUNITY

HugoDécrypte wanted to explore how different storytelling and presentation formats could make news and current affairs more accessible to young audiences, with the aim of growing the channel.

APPROACH

HugoDécrypte invested in building up resources and then experimenting with new formats (including long reports, a weekly live show, and multi-presenter discussion forums) to find what resonated with YouTube audiences.

Scaling the team: First up, HugoDécrypte wanted to develop a more robust team. Until the channel received GNI YouTube Innovation Funding, Hugo Travers was the sole reporter. But it wasn't feasible for just one person to undertake the amount of work needed to test formats and drive growth, so HugoDécrypte hired three new team members.

Introducing audiences to the new team: In order to scale, HugoDécrypte needed to move away from Hugo personally presenting every video — a challenge, given that he had single-handedly built up a large, loyal audience. The team decided to experiment with new presentation formats. They began with a single report, on a single topic, testing how dual presenters (Hugo plus another journalist) and a different production style would play with the audience. When that proved a success, they expanded the test further with a panel discussion, where six young men and women participated in a self-moderated dialogue.

Experimenting with new formats: They also wanted to test completely new storytelling formats. They tried a new fact-checking show focused on debunking popular conspiracy theories, a recurring live series, and a series deep-diving into topics through the eyes of politicians, YouTubers, and gamers.

Developing a strategy for the future: After testing presenters and formats, HugoDécrypte was able to land on what worked for their audience and develop a content strategy to move forward. For example, they found success with a self-moderated discussion panel format, but live series didn't work so well, so they limited those to tentpole news events only (e.g., election coverage).

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To continue to develop digital video, we have to keep experimenting with different formats. Some work, some don't — but to find that out is the goal.

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RESULTS

By experimenting with a range of new formats, HugoDécrypte was able to find what resonated (and what didn't) with target audiences. Today, they're successfully making news accessible to a young audience and growing the channel.

- **Almost 2X growth in subscriber numbers** in less than a year.
- **For reports longer than 15mins**, viewers watched at least half the video, on average.
- **Hugo and his team were given the opportunity to interview President Macron live** (including a Q&A from viewers) ahead of the European elections because Macron was interested in engaging a younger audience — this report garnered over 1M views.

LEARNINGS

Experimentation leads to growth: Test-and-learn your way to success so you can uncover the best combination of topic, length, presentation, and style for your audience. HugoDécrypte is now able to invest with confidence in formats that work for their audience (e.g., long-form reporting) and not waste resources on formats that don't (e.g., live series). HugoDécrypte plans to keep this mentality of experimentation as they move forward, constantly testing new formats to deliver the best results for the audience and the brand.

Longer formats are the future: Despite assumptions that millennials and Gen Zers respond best to short, pithy content, HugoDécrypte found the opposite. Younger audiences on YouTube seek out and appreciate long-form news reporting and gravitate to content that offers these options.

To scale, introduce new ways of presenting: In the early days of HugoDécrypte, Hugo Travers would present every video, and it was his personality that helped grow the brand to what it is today. But he realized this limited his ability to scale the channel, so he experimented with different presentation tactics. For example, he invited additional presenters to work alongside him and also produced videos with young people having a self-moderated discussion.