

Irirangi Te Motu  
**NZ On Air**



# **Youth Content Strategy:**

## ***Within My Reach***

October 2023

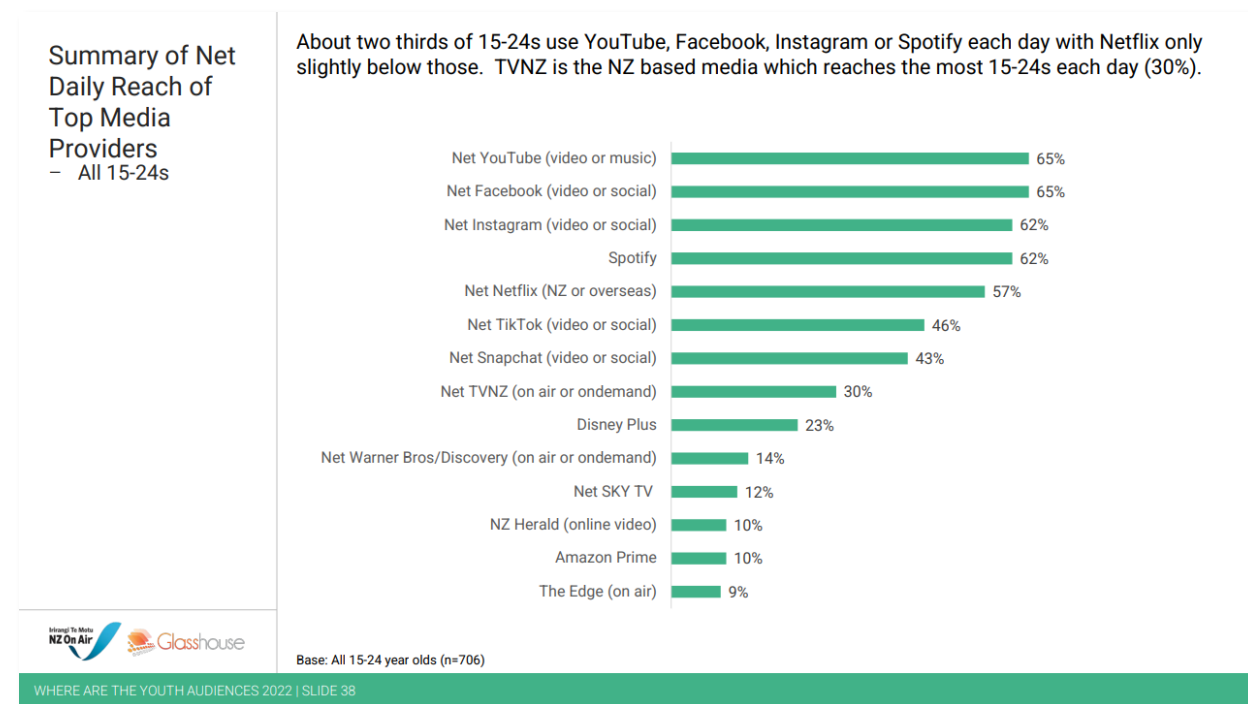


## Introduction

This strategy document outlines NZ On Air's approach to piloting a new funding initiative for youth content in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our commitment to this initiative is grounded in the understanding that the media landscape for 15 - 24-year-olds is evolving rapidly. We recognise the importance of adapting to these changing habits to ensure the continued engagement of this audience with local content. Our research into the evolving media habits of youth, '[Where Are The Youth Audiences](#),' has led to the development of this strategy.

## Understanding the Content Distribution Challenge

Our research has highlighted that 15 - 24-year-olds have largely disengaged from traditional media platforms, such as television, and are increasingly turning to social media and international streaming services as their primary sources of content. While they still value local screen content, their connection to it and awareness of it has decreased as their media habits have shifted. This poses an existential challenge for the local screen sector: how to engage with youth audiences effectively and adapt to a global media environment in which content flows freely between platforms with well-fed algorithms reacting to the world and moments happening within it. Detailed research findings are included below.



## Understanding the Challenges Faced by Creators

We spoke to a group of creators aged between 20 – 35 years old to understand the opportunities and barriers they experienced when seeking NZ On Air funding. Their feedback has been summarised into the following key observations:

- **Need for Mentorship:** There is a critical need for more mentorship opportunities. Young creators expressed a strong desire for guidance and mentorship to help them navigate the complex world of content creation and public funding.
- **Pathways to Screen Credits:** Many creators emphasised the need for more accessible pathways to gain screen credits. They feel that the current system lacks flexibility and opportunities for emerging talent to establish themselves in the industry.
- **Challenges with Youth Projects:** Youth-focused projects often face the perception of being lower in value and production quality. This perception results in constrained budgets that do not align with the requirements of youth-focused content, especially content designed for social media platforms. Creators questioned, "Where is the room to fail?" and called for funding levels that cater to the style of content they aim to produce.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Budget limitations were cited as a significant challenge, particularly when it comes to marketing the content. Creators stressed that effective promotion is as critical as the content itself, and budgets should accommodate this crucial aspect.
- **Breaking Out of Narrow Definitions:** Younger creators expressed frustration at being pigeonholed within a limited spectrum of content in terms of scale, cost, and genre. They called for a shift in mindset and skillset to allow content to thrive across multiple channels and in real-time, reflecting the dynamic nature of digital media.
- **Challenges with Local Platforms:** Creators found that local platforms, which often serve as gateways to NZ On Air funding, do not fully grasp the nuances of youth content. These platforms tend to curate content in a way that does not align with what youth audiences are accustomed to or engage with. Creators stressed the importance of adopting a content ecology approach over a single, rigid content outcome. Furthermore, established local platforms and experienced producers sometimes act as gatekeepers, creating a barrier between emerging creators and a direct relationship with NZ On Air. Young creators reported instances where they were discouraged from pursuing projects on the assumption that NZ On Air would not be interested.
- **Importance of Viral 'Moments':** Creators emphasised the significance of creating 'moments' within their content (and post release) that have the potential to go viral. These moments, often occurring outside the main content, can reignite interest and engagement with the content. The ability to respond in real-time to cultural shifts and trends is essential for capturing these moments. *"We want to be creating obsessions, not content"*.

## Our Approach

In response to the challenges identified, we are piloting the "Within My Reach" initiative. This initiative recognises the pressing need for a more adaptable and encouraging approach to funding youth content, one that is not only accessible to younger creators but also resonates with younger audiences.

"Within My Reach" is centered on several key principles:

**Fostering Mentorship:** We are committed to providing mentorship opportunities that empower young creators to navigate the intricacies of content creation successfully. By fostering mentorship, we aim to bridge the knowledge gap and offer guidance to emerging talent.

**Expanding Pathways:** Recognising the importance of diverse pathways to gain screen credits, we are dedicated to creating more accessible routes for emerging talent to establish themselves in the industry. This includes providing opportunities for creators to gain the necessary experience and recognition.

**Reevaluating Funding Processes:** We acknowledge that traditional funding processes may not adequately address the evolving landscape of youth content creation. Therefore, we are committed to reassessing our funding mechanisms to better align with the needs and aspirations of youth audiences.

**Social Media-First Approach:** "Within My Reach" places a strong emphasis on supporting screen storytellers who adopt a social media-first approach. We believe that this approach is essential for capturing the attention of young audiences who are primarily engaged on social media platforms.

**Content with Impact:** We will actively seek projects that are bold, cutting-edge, and capable of breaking through the algorithms to connect with young people.

### Key Principles for Assessing Youth Projects

In addition to our general [investment principles](#), we will evaluate youth projects based on the following principles:

Resonance	Reach	Relevance
Does the content/team have a plan and the capacity to respond to their audience in real-time? This could include a robust social media strategy or built-in interactivity.	Is the project likely to cut through the algorithm and reach the intended audience? Is there a well-defined plan, budget, and funding in place to support an ongoing rollout through social media channels?	Will the content resonate with young people? Is the team connected to and appropriate for the story they're telling? Is the content of high quality, edgy, and interesting?

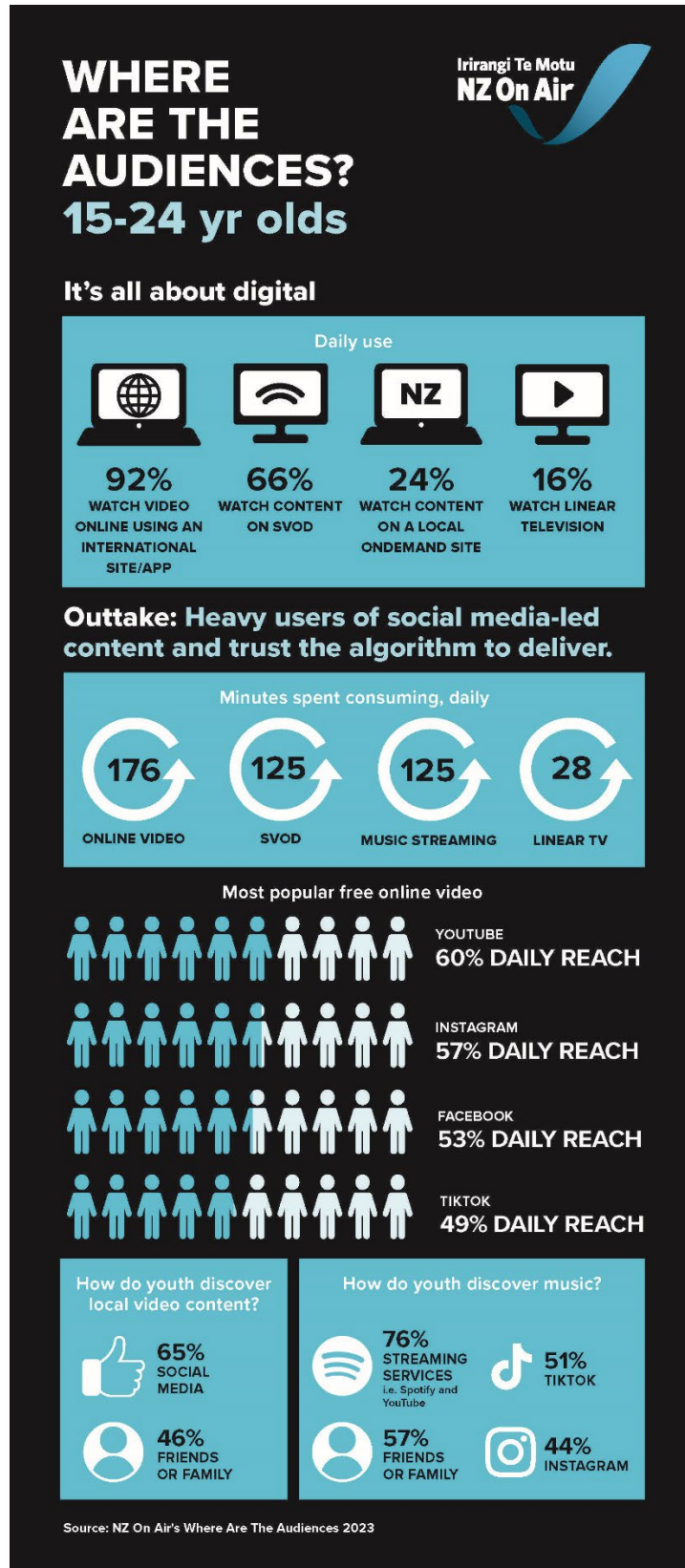
### Research

[Where Are The Youth Audiences \(2022\)](#)

[Where Are The Audiences 2023](#)

Our strategy has been designed with our annual *Where Are The Audiences* research center stage.

Our 2023 Where Are The Audiences found that:



**Key Insights from our qualitative research - Where Are The Audiences 2022 – Youth**

- The NZ youth audience (15-24s) still enjoy and value NZ content. For instance most 15-24s
  - Engage with NZ shows or music several times a week if not daily
  - Recognise the strengths of NZ content and its ability to deliver what they are looking for
  - Feel more proud to be a New Zealander when they see or hear NZ shows and music
  - In addition, all ‘Kiwi cues’ appeal to most 15-24 year olds.
- Youth are seeking self-acceptance and a sense of belonging through better representation on-screen. They are a discerning, social media literate audience who want to feel accurately represented by the content they consume. They value authenticity, accessibility and immediacy.
- However, this audience have significantly fewer opportunities to watch, hear or just learn about local content, especially video content, due to their predominantly digital media consumption and their choices of sites, channels and stations.
- These choices are strongly influenced by their perceived strengths and weaknesses of different media types and providers, with NZ based options not comparing as favorably to overseas providers. Youth expressed that local platforms felt like they weren’t “for them.”
- While attitudes to NZ content and cues are positive overall, some 15-24s hold less positive perceptions of NZ made content which will also be influencing their decisions of whether to prioritise NZ shows and music in the time they have available for entertainment and social media.

The current funding environment has led to ‘invisibility at scale’. The key to increasing 15-24s’ opportunities to engage with NZ content is to somehow break into their bubble of word of mouth and algorithm-based decision-making to let them know what they’re missing and remind this audience of the best bits of NZ content.

**A snapshot of the demographic diversity of our youth audience:**

Per Nielsen CMI Q3 22 – Q2 23 July (15 – 24 year olds)	
European	51.95%
Māori	21.37%
Asian (incl. Indian)	20.59%
Pacific Island People	14.04%
New Zealander	11.39%
Rural	11.23%
Other Ethnicity	5.77%
Per <a href="#">Youth 19</a> – study into school learners	
Rainbow	16.5%

[ends]