

Editorial Essay

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Global Content Creation and Consumption Transformation by Short Video Apps

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The rise of short video apps such as TikTok is changing how people present themselves and learn about other cultures around the world. TikTok has 1.2 billion monthly active users in 2021 and 600 million users for its original China version, Douyin (Iqbal 2022). Its amount of time use has surpassed online video giant YouTube (Garvey 2021). Online videos transformed from Webcasting based on computer platforms (Ha and Ganahl 2007) to short video apps based on mobile devices such as smartphones that can be accessible anytime. Short videos changed active internet use to passive continuous consumption with algorithm recommendation but at the same encouraged active sharing and production through imitation videos, challenges, background music provision and comments. The short duration of videos from 15 s to 3 min in these short video apps also appeals to the short attention span of Generation Z born after 1996. As a large majority of short video app users are young people, it is important to assess these videos' impact on their self-identities and behaviors. The ease to create and share videos also makes these short video apps a fertile ground for both misinformation and useful information. To promote research on this important short video phenomenon, this themed issue: TikTok, Short Video Apps and Global Communication, features five innovative original research articles examining the nature and impact of these short video apps and one review essay on the development and future of short video studies.

1 Highlights of Articles

We begin our themed issue with an invited review essay by Tao Wei and Xiaohong Wang, "A Historical Review and Theoretical Mapping on Short Video Studies

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2005–2021.” They reviewed Chinese and English language short video studies published in Web of Science and China Social Science and Science Citation Indexed journals from 2005 to 2021 from media, economic, cultural and discursive perspectives. They found Chinese journals published many more short video articles than English language journals, focus on different topics from English language journals and offer an interesting research agenda for researchers.

Our lead research article is “TikTok Intifada: Analyzing Social Media Activism among Youths” by Laila Abbas, Shahira Fahmy, Sherry Ayad, Mirna Ibrahim and Ali Abdelmoneim. Studying 203 TikTok videos reflecting the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict that took place in Sheikh Jarrah in 2021, the authors showed how TikTok videos function as playful political activism and successfully rallied international support for the marginalized Palestinians in the conflict through “TikTok Intifada.” The affordances used during the TikTok Intifada were visibility, editability, association, and persistence.

Arthur D. Soto-Vasquez’s “YouTube and TikTok as Platforms for Learning about Others: The Case of Non-Chinese Travel Videos in Shanghai Disneyland” compares YouTube and TikTok as two online video platforms employing a qualitative analysis approach. Using the Shanghai Disneyland videos as case study, Soto-Vasquez illustrates and how the short TikTok format facilitates expression of experience and self while the longer YouTube video format uses outward-focusing gazes, documenting the perspective of the video creators on others. It also critiques how Western users’ posts on social media documenting their travels can exotify locals and locales and inadvertently reproducing colonial tropes. The study contributes to fandom studies and illustrates the significance of travel videos.

Yang Yang’s “TikTok/Douyin Use and Its Influencer Video Use: A Cross Cultural Comparison between Chinese and U.S. Users” is a direct comparison of TikTok users in the U.S.A. and Douyin users in China. Contrary to expected Hofstede’s cultural value dimensions, she found cultural paradoxes that Douyin Chinese users have higher individualism and lower power distance scores than the TikTok U.S. users. Chinese and U.S. users have different preferences in the expertise of influencers. In addition, U.S. participants prefer to socialize on TikTok and most of them have more followers than their Chinese counterparts while Chinese participants are heavier users of Douyin and are more influenced by influencer videos in their purchase than U.S. users.

Anthony Fung, Milan Ismail, Wei He and Shule Cao’s “If I’m Not streaming, I’m Not Earning: Audience Relations and Platform Time on Douyin” interviewed 50 Top Douyin Creators (influencers) to reveal the nature of digital platform labor of short video creators. While the creators enjoy the freedom and independence of their work, they worry about keeping audience relations and spend a lot of time on the platform to ensure constant update to their viewers and followers. Audience

contacts have been abstracted to the analytics offered by the platform rather than true interactions. Rather than being liberated, creators are restricted by a new form of time that offers the possibilities of freedom within the confines of the platform.

Another marginalized group that can be empowered by online videos is the rural women. Zhi Li and Huijie Zhu's article, "Online Image and Self-Presentation: A Study on Chinese Rural Female Vloggers," examines a national sample of 30 rural female vloggers with large followings using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Xigua (Watermelon) Video has a dedicated rural category and these female vloggers thrive on it. Using the lens of gender theory, the authors found these vloggers' image formation is still subject to the gaze of men and the patriarchal social order and their vlogs feature daily lives in farmlands, agricultural production and raising children.

In addition to these five original articles and the review essay, we also have a review essay on online media and global communication research in Hungary and a translated article on YouTube video's impact on Saudi children as the Gem from the Global South. Gergo Háló's essay reviews online media research in Hungary and found digital divide and inequalities and critiques of the information society are common themes. A plethora of external factors stemming from the socialist and post-socialist legacy were identified to affect the Hungarian academic field today such as ideological separation, economic underdevelopment, underfunding of research and language barriers.

As the Gem from the Global South, Afnan Qutub and Alaa Muhammad's article, "The Effect of Children's Exposure to the YouTube Platform Moshaya Family Channel on Socialization of the Saudi Child Regarding Life Satisfaction," is a survey study of 353 mothers of Saudi children ages 5–15 to illustrate the negative cultivation effect of YouTube's content on children in the case of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the country with the highest use of YouTube per capita in the world (Hamden and Hundel 2019). The Saudi mothers of the children viewers of the most popular Arabic comedy channel, Moshaya Family, reported high incidences of children's imitation of the pranks in the videos and other undesirable behaviors.

Happy Reading!

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