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Kids, YouTubers and com(merch)ial confusion

Children's perspectives on sponsored content and merch

Thelandersson, Fredrika; Martinez, Carolina ; Sandberg, Helena

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

ARS05 Young audiences as media users, target groups and creative partners

PN 046 Fangirls, Meme Lovers, Gym Bros and everything in between: A study of TikTok user characteristics

Amanda Mouritsen¹

¹ Aarhus University, Media and Journalism Studies, Aarhus, Denmark

This paper presents the findings of a qualitative study of the characteristics of young, Danish TikTok users based on data collected through the method of data donation (Ohme et al., 2021; Author, forthcoming a). The paper aims to investigate the differences and similarities between the users and create different characteristics and categories of TikTok users. Coding of the data is ongoing at the time of writing this abstract. The 24 users are studied through their data download packages (Boeschoten et al., 2020) from TikTok, which they have downloaded and donated to this study. More specifically, the data consists of a sample of 100 TikTok videos from each user (2400 videos in all) from their video browsing file, which shows the content they have been presented with on the app and when. The paper builds on a previous study of genres and characteristics of TikTok videos that is based on data from the same dataset (Author, forthcoming b). Firstly, the paper investigates the users on an individual level, e.g., the characteristics of the content they are presented with and how much they use TikTok in their daily lives. Secondly, the paper compares the characteristics of the users, e.g., the prominent genres of the content (ibid.), and to what extent the app's algorithm seems to personalize their For You Page. Lastly, the paper will discuss how the users can be divided into different categories of TikTok users. The preliminary findings show, e.g., that some of the users are being heavily presented with content relating to, what is assumed to be, a specific interest of theirs – so far, they have been named, e.g., the fangirl, the meme lover, and the gym bro. Other users are more similar and are presented with more of a mixture of the different genres of videos. Besides this, the ongoing coding also shows how videos relating to big news stories of the specific time, in this case, the Depp v. Heard trial in 2022, are present in almost every user's data. References Author (forthcoming a), "Exploring Data Donation: Methodological Insights into the Study of TikTok". In *Mobile Media & Communication*. Author (forthcoming b), "Decoding TikTok-ness: An Analysis of Short-Form Video Content Genres and Characteristics on TikTok". In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. Boeschoten, L., Ausloos, J., Moeller, J., Araujo, T., & Oberski, D. L. (2020). Digital trace data collection through data donation (arXiv:2011.09851). <http://arxiv.org/abs/2011.09851> Miltsov, A. (2022). "Researching TikTok: Themes, Methods, and Future Directions". In A. Quan-Haase & L. Sloan, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* (pp. 664–676). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529782943.n46> Ohme, J., Araujo, T., de Vreese, C. H., & Piotrowski, J. T. (2021). "Mobile data donations: Assessing self-report accuracy and sample biases with the iOS Screen Time function". *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920959106>.

ARS05 Young audiences as media users, target groups and creative partners

PN 047 Kids, YouTubers and com(merch)ial confusion: Children's perspectives on sponsored content and merch

Carolina Martinez¹, Fredrika Thelandersson², Helena Sandberg³

¹ Malmö University, Childhood Education and Society, Malmö, Sweden

² Lund University, Communication and Media, Lund, Sweden

³ Lund University, Communication and Culture, Lund, Sweden

The advertising practices of YouTubers and their impact on the views and comprehension of commercial content by young followers have garnered scholarly attention in recent years (Jakkola, 2022; De Veirman, et al. 2019). While existing studies offer nuanced insights primarily into children's advertising literacy, limitations in previous research emerge from a singular treatment of YouTubers' influencer marketing as a unified phenomenon (Van Dam & Van Reijmersdal, 2019). In contrast to prior work, we distinguish between sponsored content and advertising for merchandise among YouTubers, considering them as two distinct types of advertising. Merch advertising, in particular, is perceived to have a closer connection to the YouTuber as an individual than third-party sponsoring. Building upon this distinction, this study analyzes how children appropriate sponsored content and advertising for merchandise, recognizing them as two elements within the blurred context of the parasocial relationship between the child and the YouTuber. The study relies on group interviews with 19 Swedish children aged 10 to 13. Theoretical frameworks employed in the study encompass concepts of appropriation (du Gay, 2013), moral economy (Silverstone, 1994), and parasocial relations (Lou, 2022) to explore children's engagement with sponsored content and merch advertising. The results reveal differences in children's appropriation, with sponsored content deemed more problematic than advertising for merchandise due to its perceived greater interruptive, pervasive, and deceptive nature. Additionally, discussions on merch advertising center on merchandise as products, addressing both the relevance and problematic dimensions of merchandise in children's everyday lives. These findings underscore the theoretical significance of adopting a more nuanced understanding of YouTubers' advertising practices in research involving children, YouTubers, and advertising. Additionally, we anticipate implications for policy and encourage policymakers to incorporate the concept of a more fine-grained understanding of YouTubers' commercial content in their future

developments of advertising labeling (disclosure) and codes of ethics for influencer marketing (Ortová, Hejlová & Weiss, 2023)

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ARS05 Young audiences as media users, target groups and creative partners

PN 048 Viscerality, mood control, and media literacy: children's perceptions of quality in films and series

Pia Majbritt Jensen¹, Christa Lykke Christensen²

¹ Aarhus University, Media and Journalism Studies, Aarhus, Denmark

² University of Copenhagen, Communication, Copenhagen, Denmark

This paper presents the methodology and findings of a mobile ethnographic study on how Danish 8–17-year-old children and adolescents perceive quality and relevance when it comes to their media use with a focus on series and films. Theoretically, our point of departure is that films and series have a 'cultural value' that is attributed by the beholder (Carnwath and Brown 2014), and these are the values we are interested in pinpointing, albeit from the perspectives of the children, and not from adult perspectives such as high and low culture, artistic quality, or good and bad taste (Drotner 1999). We collected the data using the method of mobile ethnography, in our case via a qualitative research tool app called Indeemo. Through this method we gave the informants various tasks relating to their media use – communicated via short online videos and text – that they in turn completed with a combination of 'selfie' videos, text and images gathered in the Indeemo app. The result of this was a rich, but still structured, qualitative data collection that took place in the comfort of their own home and, importantly, was removed from too much adult researcher interference. Hence, the method is different from traditional qualitative methods such as focus groups, observations, experimental settings, and in-depth interviews, in which the researcher is relatively conspicuous and – as previous research has established (Coulter 2021; Rooney 2017) – may therefore influence the children's behaviours and answers. The results show that the children's media diets and preferences – and media usage patterns in general – are extremely diverse. Although we see overarching tendencies, such as age and gender differences, a preference for US films and series, and a large consumption on global streaming platforms, preferences are extremely individualised among the children, even within the same families. Results also show that 'quality' is associated with content that is emotionally relatable and stimulates the senses, and the children often choose content for its 'visceral' – rather than cognitive and cinematic – qualities. They want to feel the films and series (through surprise, enjoyment, fear, disgust, sadness, etc.) rather than intellectually appreciate them. At the same time, they are highly reflective about what content they can use for achieving specific moods and feelings, as well as extremely media literate when they accurately talk about cinematic qualities (such as acting, budget, plot lines, special effects, etc.) of the films and series they watch. The children do not settle for series and films that in their opinion are second-rate, and from the age of 12, start orienting themselves toward content made for (young) adults and are thus no longer inclined to watch children's content. JD Carnwath & AS Brown (2014). *Understanding the value and impacts of cultural experiences*. Arts Council England. Coulter, N (2021). *Child Studies Meet Digital Media: Rethinking the Paradigms*. IN: *The Routledge Companion to Digital Media and Children*. Drotner K (1999). *Dangerous Media? Discourses and Dilemmas of Modernity*. *Paedagogica Historica*. Rooney, T (2017). *Spy Kids Too: Encounters with surveillance through games and play*. IN: (eds) *Surveillance Futures*.

ARS05 Young audiences as media users, target groups and creative partners

PN 049 Who knows the audience best: Scandinavian media institutions' production and use of audience data

Jakob Freudendal¹

¹ Aarhus University, Media Studies and Journalism, Aarhus, Denmark

The 2010s have seen a growing ambition of connecting production and audience studies to investigate how specific meanings are embedded during the encoding stage of cultural production and how these meanings are