

Transformations of Egyptian identity in the context of short digital media

“YouTube as a model”

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Abstract

This study explores how short-form digital media — with YouTube Shorts as a case in point — is reshaping Egyptian cultural and ideological identity in today’s digital age. As short videos have rapidly spread across Egypt and the Arab world, platforms like YouTube have become more than just sources of entertainment; they are now key battlegrounds where identity, news quality, and public debate are symbolically contested. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative content analysis of 100 trending Shorts with qualitative digital ethnography of 550 user comments, this research examines how production quality, storytelling, and audience interaction come together to create new meanings and shape social attitudes.

Grounded in mediatization approach, Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model, entertainment theory, and digital ethnography, the study shows that short videos increasingly favor engagement, relatability, and symbolic messaging over traditional journalistic benchmarks like depth, factual accuracy, and objectivity. It finds that humor, sarcasm, hybrid language, and coded symbols — seen both in videos and comment threads — help create a lively digital discourse in which Egyptian youth actively negotiate and contest ideological meanings.

The findings point to a clear shift: news quality today is not just defined by professional standards but is co-produced by platform algorithms, user behaviors, and the logics that shape what gets seen and shared. This evolving media environment breaks down linguistic barriers, intensifies echo chambers, and opens up parallel spaces for public debate. It reveals how Egyptian users blend local and global cultural references to navigate and redefine their identities within an ever-changing digital ecosystem.

Keywords:

Egyptian identity, YouTube Shorts, News quality, Digital culture

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تحولات الهوية المصرية في سياق الإعلام الرقمي القصير "اليوتيوب نموذجاً"

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ملخص الدراسة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الكيفية التي يُعيد بها الإعلام الرقمي قصير المدى — مُمثلاً في منصة «يوتيوب شورتس» — تشكيل الهوية الثقافية والأيديولوجية لدى الشباب المصري في ظل التحولات الرقمية المتسارعة. ومع الانتشار الواسع للفيديوهات القصيرة في مصر والعالم العربي، أضحت هذه المنصات تتجاوز كونها وسائل ترفيهية لتتحول إلى فضاءات رمزية تُخاض فيها معارك المعنى حول الهوية وجودة الأخبار والخطاب العام. وتعتمد الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً يجمع بين التحليل الكمي لمحتوى مائة مقطع شورتس من الأكثر رواجاً، والتحليل الإثنوغرافي الرقمي لعينة مكونة من ٥٥٠ تعليقاً للمستخدمين، بهدف تحليل كيف تسهم جودة الإنتاج وبنية السرد وتفاعل الجمهور في إنتاج دلالات جديدة وصياغة مواقف اجتماعية متجددة.

وترتكز هذه الدراسة على مقارنة التوسط الإعلامي، ونموذج ستيوارت هول للترميز وفك الترميز، ونظرية الترفيه، إضافةً إلى المنهج الإثنوغرافي الرقمي، لتبرز كيف باتت الفيديوهات القصيرة تُقدم التفاعل وسهولة الارتباط واللغة الرمزية على حساب المعايير الصحفية التقليدية كالعُمق والدقة والموضوعية. وقد كشفت النتائج أن الفكاهة والسخرية واللغة الهجينة والرموز المشفرة — سواء في المحتوى ذاته أو في أقسام التعليقات — تُنتج خطاباً رقمياً ديناميكياً يُعيد من خلاله الشباب المصري التفاوض على المعاني الأيديولوجية وإعادة صياغتها.

كما تؤكد النتائج حدوث تحول نوعي في مفهوم جودة الأخبار، حيث لم تعد مقترنةً فقط بالمعايير المهنية التقليدية، بل أصبحت نتاجاً تشاركياً تسهم في صياغته خوارزميات المنصات وسلوكيات الجمهور وآليات العرض والانتشار الرقمية. وتبرز الدراسة كيف ساهم هذا الفضاء الإعلامي في إذابة الحدود اللغوية، وتعزيز ظواهر الانغلاق المعلوماتي (الغرف الصدى)، وخلق مساحات موازية للنقاش العام. كما توضح كيف يوظف المستخدمون المصريون إشارات ثقافية محلية وعالمية لإعادة تشكيل هوياتهم ضمن بنية تحتية رقمية سريعة التحول.

تسدّ هذه الدراسة فجوة بحثية تتعلق بندرة الدراسات المحلية التي تستخدم مقاربات مختلطة لفهم دور الإعلام الرقمي في تشكيل الهوية الأيديولوجية في السياقات غير الغربية، وتدعو إلى المزيد من الدراسات النقدية المعمّقة لفهم التداخل بين المنصات الرقمية القصيرة ووكالة الجمهور وحوكمة الخوارزميات في إعادة إنتاج المعنى الإخباري والتعبير الثقافي والصراع الأيديولوجي في المجتمع المصري المعاصر.

الكلمات الدالة:

الهوية المصرية، يوتيوب شورتس، جودة الأخبار، الثقافة الرقمية

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Introduction:

The growing popularity of short videos in Egypt and the Arab world across various digital media platforms, which reach users through social media or mobile applications, has opened new horizons for aspects and practices of digital media culture. Studying the effects of short video content and other communication methods on Arab identity and cultural norms—especially in Egyptian society—has thus become crucial. Consequently, new ideological maps must be drawn to account for internet users' interactions and comments, the quality of featured news and videos, and users' perceptions and beliefs about the digitization of societal culture and identity (Al-Nawawi & Khamis, 2019; Al-Badri, 2020; Ramadan, 2019).

With the spread of short video culture, digital platforms are no longer merely tools for entertainment. They have become spaces for the struggle over identity representation, shaping social perceptions, and shaping public opinion beyond traditional media systems (Burgess & Green, 2018; Papacharissi, 2015). The danger of this phenomenon has increased as digital electronic media has transcended reality, targeting the obsession of reconstructing identity, transcending ideology, and controlling cultures. Identity has become a dynamic process of reconstructing and reshaping visual content, user feedback, and digital interaction mechanisms. (Boyd, 2014; Bauman, 2001).

In this context, short videos on YouTube gain double importance, not only for their widespread reach but also for their ability to reproduce symbols and connotations that contribute to shaping what can be considered a "collective digital identity" for users, in which individual tendencies and ideological affiliations intertwine. The comments and interactions accompanying these videos are one of the most prominent manifestations of collective opinion expression, reflecting—or contradicting—visual media discourse and often creating a parallel space for cultural and political debate (Fuchs, 2021; Abidin, 2020). This relies on the digital media's invasion of unexpectedly emerging "youth" cultures to add values that shape, converge, and transform the ideological divide. Surprisingly, even though high-quality news is used to address important issues like politics and social peace, it is not necessary to broadcast it in short videos and key excerpts in order to become popular, attract attention, or be idolized. However, defining, applying, and quantifying media excellence is challenging because evaluative criteria are essentially subjective views of an ideal society that have already evolved. Thus, reflecting on the binary relationship between digital culture and social identity enables us to view the quality of news media as a dynamic, contingent, and contested construct, taking into account our understanding of it. While classical

journalistic standards assume that the accuracy of information measures news quality, the balance of coverage, and the depth of analysis, short video clips indicate a fundamental shift in the public's understanding of "quality," where digital popularity—driven by engagement and virality—is determined more by professional standards (Hermida, 2012; Tandoc et al., 2018). Therefore, studying the quality of these clips and analyzing user interactions with them is essential for understanding how media is being reshaped in the digital age and how Egyptian identity is being reshaped in light of these transformations.

This study aims to analyze the short video media ecosystem in Egypt, with a focus on YouTube, during the period from July 15, 2021, to July 31, 2022. The research employs a mixed approach that combines quantitative analysis of the fifty most popular clips with qualitative analysis of user comments to explore how these interactions influence the prevailing digital culture and contribute to reorienting Egyptian ideological identity. The study adopts a cultural and critical approach to media, considering the dynamic and contested nature of concepts such as quality, representation, and identity in interactive digital media (Castells, 2009; Papacharissi, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The period from July 2021 to July 2022 witnessed a significant shift, not only in the Egyptian digital landscape, but also in the evolving ways people engage with short-form content online, following the official launch of YouTube Shorts in December 2021, according to YouTube. The launch of new short-form content tools and the evolving ways people become impulse buyers of content have radically changed the style, method, and forms of digital engagement (Daily News Egypt, 2021). In December of the same year, YouTube announced the launch of the so-called "Short Content Fund" in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which includes Egypt, to support emerging content creators in producing more innovative short clips. The growth of short-form content was fueled by the use of the Short Content Fund, contributing to the transformation of digital identity and popular culture through new cultural forms (SceneNow, 2021). A YouTube regional manager commenting on the growth achieved that month appears to have noted that more than two-thirds of channels generated more than five and six figures in revenue. There is a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data on cultural transformations and digital identity that can be extracted from these reports, which are not provided by real-time data and changing content. Therefore, the period from July 15, 2021, to July 31, 2022, was chosen as the timeframe for the study, given its pivotal role in the evolution of digital content production and reception patterns in Egypt and the Arab world, particularly on YouTube. Relying on data from this period provides a level of analytical stability,

especially in light of the ongoing changes in digital platforms' algorithms and the deletion or modification of content by users or the platform itself, which may limit the reliability of studies based on very recent, real-time data. This period also provides sufficient time to analyze content from a critical and cultural perspective that goes beyond superficial engagement with media phenomena, enabling us to trace their impact on concepts of identity, quality, and representation in the Egyptian context.

Review of literature

1.Digital Media as Cultural Infrastructure and Functional Transformation

Digital media has dramatically reshaped what we consider the public sphere and how media infrastructures function. It blurs the lines between what is public and what is private, transforming how people engage civically (Radošinská & Višňovský, 2016). Today's digital platforms have become infrastructures in their own right, overlapping with traditional media in complex ways, which means we need flexible, mixed-methods approaches to understand them (Plantin & Punathambekar, 2019).

Culturally, digital media changes how audiences interact with and produce culture. It expands opportunities for participation and creativity, often allowing people to bypass old gatekeepers (Arsenijević et al., 2022). This shift has shaken up business models, redefined national media boundaries, and underscored the centrality of communication to modern social development (Bruun & Frandsen, 2019).

The internet has grown from a technical tool into a profoundly social and technological space that reorganizes knowledge and social ties (Fuchs, 2003). It both reflects and drives social change, generating new relationships and ways of communicating (Ljaljic, 2020). Shifting from top-down information flows to interactive dialog has increased the democratic potential of the online sphere (Fuchs, 2003).

The newfound informational potential affords new challenges to conversant publics. Academics have already alerted citizens about the implications of this changing landscape to citizenship, identity, and democracy (Poster, 2001). As connectivity expands, it disrupts the way knowledge is produced and shared, necessitating new theories and methods to keep pace (Andersen, 2002; Poster, 2001).

Today, digital platforms are woven into daily life and communication habits (van Dijck et al., 2018). They overlap with traditional media and extend into

areas such as education, health, and transportation, creating tensions among civic needs, market forces, and regulations (Plantin et al., 2018).

Seeing these platforms as infrastructures helps us understand how they grow and shift. Platform studies remind us that digital systems enable certain types of communication but also limit others (Plantin et al., 2018). For example, TikTok's algorithms encourage mimicry and virality, creating what Zulli and Zulli (2020) refer to as a "mock audience."

These changes require cross-disciplinary, multimedia research (Plantin & Punathambekar, 2019). Media transformation theory posits that media technology not only delivers content but also shapes everyday life and drives long-term cultural change (Krotz, 2017; Couldry & Hepp, 2016). Media are not neutral tools; they are living institutions with their logic, deeply connected to religion, politics, and education (Hepp, 2008; Stoyan, 2015). This study employs that lens to examine how short videos, such as YouTube Shorts, function as cultural infrastructures for symbolism and ideology.

2. Short Video Culture: Digital Identity and Visual Media

Short videos have become powerful tools for building digital identity, sharing culture, and shaping meaning. Researchers have shown that this format has changed how people interact, behave, and relate to cultural norms (Chen, 2023). Short videos also serve as soft-power tools, helping to preserve local culture and strengthen the national image (Yan, 2023). They teach young audiences visual language, making them more fluent in symbolic forms of communication (Nishito et al., 2003).

Influencers, athletes, and everyday people use short videos to craft public identities and connect with shared cultural signs through visual storytelling (Luo, 2023). This goes far beyond entertainment — short videos influence how culture is practiced, social life unfolds, and traditional forms are modernized and spread in digital spaces (Yan, 2023; Luo, 2023).

This format also feeds our craving for instant gratification and has changed how we pay attention (Limbachiya, 2025). TikTok is a prime example — its viral algorithms can spread both information and misinformation (Yin, 2024). In places like Pakistan, short videos have even replaced certain traditional practices, illustrating how local culture is merging with global digital habits (Qureshi et al., 2025).

This study builds on these insights to examine how Egyptian youth utilize YouTube Shorts to encode symbols and negotiate ideas, thereby shaping their identity within fast-moving, short-form media streams.

3. Changing News Consumption in Digital Spaces

Digital metrics and new formats are reshaping how people consume news and judge its quality. Pressure to chase clicks can lower journalistic standards (Forrest, 2020). At the same time, young people often view news as more than just information — it is also a means to connect and build community (Küsterer & Maier, 2007). They judge news videos based on how they feel and how well they are made (Kolishka et al., 2021).

However, studies show many people struggle to assess a story's ethical or factual quality (Urban & Schweiger, 2014). This creates a tension: young audiences value credible journalism but often prefer quick, light, or funny content (Küsterer & Maier, 2007). Newspapers must balance balancing quality journalism with audience preferences, which is always balancing. This study looks at how quality, narrative, and symbols in YouTube Shorts influence perceived credibility and meaningfulness in the eyes of younger audiences.

4. Ideological Identity in Digital Spaces

Fast-paced digital change has rendered ideological identity a fluid and layered concept. Online spaces expand how people construct and refine their sense of self, engage in debate, and challenge dominant views (Mahlouly, 2014). Here, individual identity collides with broader cultural and political currents. Young people shape identity by selecting what to share and how to express it, constantly remixing themselves (Suh et al., 2024).

As online and offline selves blend, new, sometimes fragmented ways of presenting identity appear — what Gashkova (2018) calls “fractal narratives.” People experiment with multiple selves while being shaped by algorithm-driven systems (Gashkova, 2018; Cioara, 2025). Social media provides them with space to build virtual identities that may differ from their offline selves (Arista et al., 2014; Satchell & Foth, 2008), offering new ways to express themselves while also raising complex questions about privacy and authenticity (Bondarevska et al., 2025).

This complexity makes digital literacy vital — not just for using tools but for thinking critically about how we present ourselves online (Arista, 2013). Research indicates that for marginalized or diasporic youth, digital platforms can serve as powerful spaces for cultural identity work (McKenzie, 2022; Bala, 2024). However, as Buckingham (2013) cautions, we should not view technology as the sole driver — young people also shape their digital lives. This study employs this perspective to examine how coded visuals, slang, and

symbols in YouTube Shorts influence the ideological identity of Egyptian youth.

5. Production Quality, Narrative, and Ideology

Production quality — including clear visuals, effective editing, and strong storytelling — significantly influences how audiences perceive ideological messages (Dai & Wang, 2023; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). High-quality production can create more emotional and intellectual impact, boosting credibility and reach. Narrative persuasion theory supports this — compelling stories help people relate to messages and can shift attitudes (Green & Brock, 2000; Rieger et al., 2018).

Critical media thinkers, such as Hall and Gramsci, remind us that ideology sticks not through force, but through how audiences accept coded symbols (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). For short-form videos, being aware of how editing and visuals embed ideas can increase media literacy and make viewers aware of concealed ideological cues. This research contributes to these ideas and thus interrogates how the symbols, production value and storytelling of Shorts create viewers' ideological sensemaking.

6. Digital Commentary and Audience Interaction

Online comments have changed how content is interpreted. Audiences do not just consume — they co-create meaning, challenging the traditional editorial gatekeepers (Jensen, 2018; Neville, 2019). The concept of a “digital afterlife” illustrates how youth-created content is reworked by institutions, maintaining content fluidity (Soep, 2012). This participatory space requires new skills, including understanding how algorithms work and how to engage responsibly with large online audiences (Soep, 2012). Comments can deepen debate, but they can also fuel echo chambers or polarization (Batorski & Grzywińska, 2018; Boulianne et al., 2016). When managed well, though, they can breathe new life into the public sphere (Papacharissi, 2004).

7. Ethical Dimensions and Risks

Digital spaces invite ethical inquiries - from misinformation to surveillance (Florida, 2019; Reamer, 2013). Toxic or hostile comments can destroy trust and create reluctance for users to participate (Huang et al., 2014; Yamamoto et al., 2020). Journalists face the dilemma of believing in certain ideals while also accepting that users often want light, fast, viral content (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2010). Understanding these tradeoffs will help us assess how Shorts engage audiences and balance production quality and ideological framing in a more unequal and shifting media environment.

When it comes to video quality, research founded that the way the video was made (in terms of resolutions, editing techniques, successes and failures in its storytelling capacity, and aesthetic preferences) was integral to shaping and advancing ideologies (Dai & Wang, 2023; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). When a video is uploaded with high production quality (meaning that the person who uploaded it paid money, had cool editing capabilities, and employed cinematographic skills to develop their story), there seems to be a greater emotional and intellectual response to that video; therefore, the reach and credibility of the message seem greater. (Dai & Wang, 2023).

For example, beliefs about media context and content are ongoing areas of study in communication. However, groups such as Horth Greenbier and George Gross (cultivation theory) consider the effect of ongoing media exposure (and message saturation) on shaping understandings of reality. Theories of narrative persuasion suggest that coherent stories to which the audience can respond emotionally can both intensify the audience's comprehension of topic issues and shape their reaction (Green & Brock, 2000; Rieger et al., 2018).

Critical media studies also look at this issue and suggest that researches gradually learn to construct ideologies through representations. For example, Stuart Hall and Antonio Gramsci suggest that ideology is not imposed through political coercion but rather through acceptance. (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001)

Why studying video quality and ideology together matters

Improving attention and engagement:

Dai & Wang (2023) found that better production quality (i.e., visual narrative elements and sensory effects) meaningfully activates viewers' emotions and increases engagement to enhance the effectiveness of an ideological message.

Values and (dis)position formation:

Rieger et al.'s (2018) findings confirm that good narratives, even in short videos, enhance the embeddedness of values and attitudes, particularly among young people. Furthermore, this can be used to apply ideological content to information-seeking practices and interactions with digital technology.

Fostering media literacy:

Knowing production quality can serve as a valuable method for investigating how editing and production tools are used to signal specific messages and enhance the critical thought process of audience members (Green & Brock, 2000).

Navigating Educational and Media Strategies:

The combination of technical quality and clear message(s) aids in the creation of responsible media content that is mindful of persuasion on a dimension (to develop fundamental understanding on the other)—this involves, ultimately, creating a healthy and balanced digital space (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001).

Production quality is more than a form of aesthetics; rather, it is an essential measure that influences how far ideologies can be conveyed through media. The addition of quality action to well-considered and produced narrative tools transforms video into a broad-reaching device that shapes perceptions and identity. Therefore, understanding the relationship between quality and content is vital to understanding the role of digital media in shaping our intellectual climate and cultural context (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; Dai & Wang, 2023; Green & Brock, 2000; Rieger et al., 2018).

Conclusion:

The literature shows we have a strong foundation for studying digital platforms and short videos. However, gaps remain: an overemphasis on Western-focused studies, a lack of critical theories (such as surveillance capitalism or digital colonialism), limited mixed-methods research, and a scarcity of long-term studies that track cultural change. This study addresses these gaps by combining content analysis and digital ethnography to examine how YouTube Shorts in Egypt encode and decode meanings that contribute to shaping ideological identity in a rapidly evolving media environment.

Despite a rich body of research on digital media infrastructures, short video culture, and online ideological identity, significant theoretical and methodological gaps remain, and this study aims to address them.

First, much of the current scholarship leans too heavily on technological determinism, treating digital platforms as all-powerful while often ignoring how social contexts shape how people use these tools (Fox, 2003). To balance this, we need critical perspectives that focus on the social shaping of technology — or draw on practice theory — to better understand how people negotiate the everyday use of platforms like YouTube Shorts within specific cultural settings.

Second, there is an apparent lack of locally grounded research that demonstrates how global platforms engage with non-Western social and political realities, particularly in more conservative or semi-authoritarian contexts. While major studies tend to focus on Western audiences and platforms (e.g., Van Dijck et al., 2018), they rarely delve into how digital

infrastructures intersect with local norms, censorship, or youth cultures in places like Egypt or the broader Arab world.

Third, identity and cultural expression are sometimes oversimplified. Digital identity is often treated as fixed or easily labeled (Siwara, 2025; Gashkova, 2018). However, classic theories of identity performance (Goffman, 1959) and cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) remind us that identity is constantly in motion, fluid, relational, and shaped by context — all qualities that short video cultures amplify.

Fourth, methodological gaps persist. Many studies rely on either quantitative or qualitative methods alone — such as fundamental content analysis or surveys — without combining them to gain insight into the deeper cultural and psychological layers at play (Batorski & Grzywińska, 2018; Prochazka et al., 2018). Few studies engage with algorithmic analysis or critical data studies (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) to demonstrate how algorithms influence what people see and how they interpret it.

Fifth, we lack sufficient long-term research. While some studies map media change at a single point in time (e.g., Stoyan, 2015; Hepp, 2008), understanding cultural shifts — mainly how ideological identities are constructed and reconfigured — requires a longer view to capture how meanings evolve.

Sixth, concepts like functional transformation are often left vague (Krotz, 2017; Couldry & Hepp, 2016). It is not always clear whether this refers to changes in what media institutions do, how media forms operate, or how institutions interact with each other — this fuzziness limits the extent to which the concept accurately explains what is happening.

Finally, many studies overlook the political economy behind digital infrastructures. Prominent theories, such as surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) and digital colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019), are rarely employed to examine how profit models and data extraction influence the operation of platforms, and how this, in turn, affects the dissemination of ideological messages. Relatedly, there is still a tendency to be overly optimistic about digital democracy (Papacharissi, 2004; Fox, 2003) without fully reckoning with how digital systems can reproduce power gaps, deepen digital divides (Van Dijk, 2005), and enable algorithmic gatekeeping.

To fill these gaps, this study adopts a critical, mixed-method approach using digital ethnography, a type of content analysis, political economy, and cultural studies. By prioritizing these perspectives, this study seeks to provide a clearer,

more grounded understanding of how YouTube Shorts shape, and are shaped by, local culture, youth agency and ideologically-driven storytelling within Egypt's dynamic digital environment.

Preliminary (Pilot) Study:

At the beginning of the research process, a limited pilot study was conducted to check data collection tools and whether they were fit for the Egyptian digital context (specifically on YouTube), as well as to refine the sample design and analysis.

Pilot Study Aim:

- To test the validity of a content analysis card designed to classify short video elements (narrative frame, visual effects, digital identity, cultural symbols).
- To test the effectiveness of user comment classification tools (liking, engagement, ideological content, emotional response).
- To evaluate the target audience's response to a survey used to identify trending videos.

Pilot Study Procedures:

A small sample of 10 short video clips was selected (5 from media outlets (Alhayah Sada El-Balad, Extra News, Al Arabiya, Sky News Arabia), and five from personal channels (Abdullah Al-Sharif, Citizen Saeed, Al-Daheeh, Asl Al-Hikaya, and Al-Waei Noor). These channels were filtered from a list of the 100 most popular channels in Egypt and selected by a group of 10 respondents who follow content related to politics, news, and entertainment.

Fifty interactive comments were analyzed using a manual qualitative approach, in addition to applying a simple sentiment classification using an experimental model based on a combination of emojis and word frequency.

As part of the exploratory stage, a focus group was conducted with ten active Egyptian YouTube users (ages 18-٤٠) to discuss their daily viewing habits and content preferences, as well as determine which short-form video formats and channels they feel carry the most weight. The group also served to assess the clarity and functionality of the initial coding categories. Based on feedback provided during the focus group, the coding categories and analytical dimensions were revised to align more closely with the lived experiences and perceptions of users. The incorporation of this focus group, along with additional pilot coding and intercoder checks, contributed to the construct validity of the study and ensured that the final analysis accurately represented

the influence of short-form video content and audience engagement on ideological identity within Egypt's complex digital media environment. Pilot Study Results:

The content analysis card was modified to add a new category related to "national/religious sentiment" in the Discourse.

The pilot study revealed that some quantitative indicators (i.e., the number of likes alone) were insufficient to identify the most important or relevant comments; therefore, the research included the criterion of "discussion and interaction."

The two valuable pieces of information learned from the pilot survey were the indications for refining some of the questions and the discovery of the need to add an open-ended question regarding the participants' relationships to the ideological statement.

The pilot study informed the final designs:

- Changes were made to the research instruments in the pilot study that accounted for the cultural context of Egypt.
- It improved the chances of targeting the videos and comments that were pertinent to the research question.
- It also provided a preliminary sense of the dominant ideological patterns gleaned from the comments and informed us on how to develop the analytical axes for our main study.

Upon evaluating the survey results, it became clear that a list comprising only the 'most-viewed' channels was insufficient to establish the most popular content in Egypt. The large viewing numbers raised topics that were interesting to the Middle East but not necessarily to an Egyptian audience. While participating in the focus group, listening to participants dispelled that belief, leading us to revise our original means of selection. Rather than connecting video circulation to the channel name as a category to influence selection, the researcher connected the channel name to institutional or personal affiliation. Then selected the sample according to a combination of video popularity, circulation, and semantic relevance to the Egyptian context for the user. This ability to evolve these measures helped, mainly because, at the time, YouTube Shorts was still a new service, but also to ensure analyzing content and interactions that more accurately represented the digital and ideological identities of Egyptian users, as opposed to solely the reputational identity of the channels alone.

Purpose of the study

The importance of this study is underscored by the rapid changes in news and media consumption patterns, particularly through short video clips, in the Egyptian context. With the increasing use of platforms like YouTube to share news and information, new cultural and ideological identities are emerging where entertainment intersects with political and social content. The study aims to understand how these platforms produce new forms of artistic and media influence by analyzing the content of short videos and the audience interactions associated with them. This enables an explanation of the transformations in users' ideological identities in the digital environment. The study also contributes to filling a research gap related to the absence of qualitative local studies that integrate content analysis and digital ethnography to understand the relationship between content quality, digital interaction, and the construction of cultural identity.

Problem statement:

Due to rapidly changing digital transformations, short videos have emerged as one of the key cultural and media influence tools, especially with youth. Platforms, such as YouTube with Shorts, serve as articulation spaces for entertainment, expressing political opinions, and debating values while simultaneously raising questions about their association with a broader reshaping of ideological identity in Arab contexts.

Despite the rise in the production of this type of content, Arab studies remain limited in their ability to address the relationship between production quality, visual symbols, and short video discourse, as well as their impact on social perception and cultural and political representations.

This study seeks to fill this gap through a qualitative ethnographic analysis of the most popular short video content on YouTube in Egypt. It aims to understand the mechanisms through which ideological identity is reconstructed, whether by official media institutions or independent personal channels.

It also focuses on how interactive comments contribute to the reproduction or resistance of embedded ideological discourse in a context characterized by cultural, political, and informational complexities.

Research Questions

The study explores the following main research questions:

RQ1 – (Digital News Quality and User Behavior): What technical and cultural factors influence the quality of news in short digital videos? How does users' level of digital literacy shape their priorities regarding quality and credibility?

RQ2 – (Topics and Comments): What types of issues or topics stimulate intense public engagement in short YouTube videos? How do digital knowledge sources shape audience attitudes and interactions with these issues?

RQ 3 – (Ideological Identity): What factors contribute to shaping the ideological identity of Egyptian users in the digital space? What digital roles and practices do they follow in constructing their cultural and political perceptions?

Theoretical Framework

The study aims to investigate how digital ideology is reproduced and cultural identity is constructed in Egyptian society through short videos on digital platforms such as YouTube in the Middle East. To achieve this, four complementary theoretical approaches and research methods are employed:

Mediatization Approach:

This approach addresses the concept of "media influence," assuming that media not only convey meaning but also represent and redefine social and cultural life through their own "media logic," which requires organizations, discourses, and practices to adhere to its rules (Hjarvard, 2008). With the proliferation of digital platform companies, such as YouTube, the current ecosystem of digital platforms has become an integral part of everyday life, altering the nature of interaction, how public issues are constructed and represented, and how cultural identities are formed and utilized.

This theoretical approach confirmed that digital media are more than circumstantial media. The digital sphere exists as a complex environment that reconfigures all the knowledge, belonging, cultural markers, and a distinct application in the traditional transitional cultural field of Egyptian society.

Thoughts and assumptions about the objective of this study:

- That media has/remains as its logic in the social space.
- That the vehicles of social and cultural change exist in an inextricable relationship and cannot be separated from what a change in media implies.

Our assumptions:

- That media has its logic and agency within the social space.

- That cultural and social change will always have a direct correlation with a change in media.
- Human beings create meanings and identities through media and will no longer rely on traditional institutions.

Applying the method:

1. The study explored the platform's structure, specifically YouTube's filtering and suggesting algorithms, to consider how the relevance of content related to the authority of discourse.
2. Recorded viewer engagement with the audience's interaction with the video via metadata (number of views, number of thumbs up, shares, etc.), which we might consider forms of meaning reproduction.
3. Directed interviews with ten Egyptian users to confirm the study sample and their exposure to and knowledge of the most popular content.

Second: Encoding/Decoding Theory

Stuart Hall developed this theory to understand how meaning is produced in media messages. Hall argues that media producers "encode" messages within ideological frameworks, which audiences receive and decode in multiple ways, including assenting to the message (dominant reading), negotiating with it, or rejecting it (Hall, 1980). In this context, the comments users leave on short video clips are an important way to investigate the ways the ideological messages exerted by the media are received and interpreted.

Assumptions:

- Media messages are never received uniformly; they are always in the process of interpretation.
- Receivers are engaged in producing meaning.
- The media is a site of symbolic struggle as to what constitutes the truth.

Application of Methodology in the Research:

1. Content Analysis: Selected clips were categorized based on their themes (political, cultural, and entertainment).
2. Comment Field: 550 user comments were collected and divided into reading patterns (accordance, negotiation, rejection) to determine the variance of interpretations.

3. Experimental Coding Guide: To verify the recurrence of interpretive patterns, a coding guide consisting of two main categories (videos and comments) was used.

Third: Entertainment Theory

This theory explains why users consume entertainment content, particularly on digital platforms, and how the elements of pleasure and emotional engagement influence their interpretation of content. The theory focuses on the psychological and cognitive satisfaction resulting from watching videos. It argues that pleasure and persuasion are not fundamentally different, but rather may work together to form behavior and identity (Forder et al., 2004). Its basic assumptions are as follows:

- Users are looking for pleasure, escapism, and self-exploration.
- Entertainment may be an indirect vector of ideology.
- The quality of production leads to more engagement, as well as emotional and cognitive impact.

Applying the theory to video content analysis:

Production quality analysis: studying filming techniques, editing, visual and audio effects, and how they are employed to attract the audience's attention and satisfy their need for entertainment, the type of narrative, the degree of entertainment, its relationship to the message's theme, and the presentation style.

Fourth: Digital Ethnography Strategies

Because this study falls within the framework of digital ethnography, it uses tools such as qualitative content analysis of comments and digital observation to interpret the symbolic, visual, and linguistic interactions produced by users. These tools are used to understand how ideological identity is reproduced through digital practices, comments, and interactions with short videos of a news and entertainment nature.

Through this theoretical intersection between media, identity, and culture, the study aims to understand how digital media, particularly short videos, contribute to the reproduction of ideology within an interactive structure that combines production and consumption, institutions and users, and discourse and practice.

Fourth: Digital Ethnography

Digital ethnography is a qualitative method for studying how symbolic and visual meanings are produced within digital environments. This method typically focuses on in-depth observation of digital phenomena to understand the social and cultural contexts in which content is created and reproduced.

Method Assumptions:

- Visual content is not understood in isolation from its production context, but rather is analyzed within the network of symbols and signs it reproduces.
- Ethnographic analysis relies on reading visual and symbolic elements as an integrated narrative that expresses cultural and ideological orientations.
- This framework makes it possible to read non-verbal symbols and signals in videos for interpreting their implicit messages.

Utilizing Digital Ethnography for Video Content Analysis:

In this study, content was analyzed in the video applying the strategies of digital ethnography by:

1. Deconstructing Visual Codes: Reading visual elements (colors, shots, locations) as cultural or ideological messages that reshape collective consciousness.
2. Interpreting the visual context: Examining the environment or spatial setting appearing in the video to understand implicit meanings.
3. Monitoring narrative strategies: Analyzing how meaning is constructed and how entertainment is emphasized while maintaining symbolic or ideological dimensions.

Conclusion: Through this theoretical and practical integration, the study reveals the mechanisms by which digital ideology and identity are reproduced in Egypt, as evidenced by exposure to the most popular short videos in the Middle East.

Methodological Framework

This research employs a digital ethnographic approach, utilizing a mixed-methods content analysis to investigate YouTube Shorts. The core method blends quantitative content analysis — tracking frequencies, categories, and statistical patterns — with qualitative interpretation that deciphers symbolic,

linguistic, and visual cues. This combined approach was chosen as the most effective way to explore how ideological identity is shaped and reshaped through symbolic and visual interactions in short videos, particularly on YouTube, a significant platform for Egyptian youth.

The study examined 100 carefully selected Shorts: 50 from official media outlets and 50 from individual or popular channels. These were chosen based on data from YouTube Analytics, Google Trends, and a small survey of 10 regular Egyptian YouTube viewers, covering the period from July 15, 2021, to July 31, 2022.

A detailed content analysis framework was used to examine content type, media narratives, cultural symbols, and both explicit and implicit ideological messages. Additionally, 550 representative user comments were purposefully selected for analysis, combining engagement data with manual qualitative coding.

While simple automated sentiment tools were used to identify general trends, the primary analysis relied on manual coding and qualitative interpretation to understand how cultural and ideological identities emerge within the short-form digital news space.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the **reliability** of the qualitative content analysis, this study applied **inter-coder reliability** as a central measure to verify coding consistency. The leading researcher acted as the first coder, while a trained research assistant served as the second coder to cross-check a sample of the data.

To calculate the agreement level, **Holsti's formula** was used on a pilot sample (10 short videos and 50 selected user comments). The intercoder agreement was computed as follows:

$$Reliability = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

where:

- **M** = the number of coding decisions both coders agreed on,
- **N₁, N₂** = total coding decisions by coder one and coder two, respectively.

The final reliability score reached **0.84**, indicating strong consistency and clear operational definitions in the coding scheme.

Regarding **validity**, the coding framework (for videos and comments) was developed through:

- An examination of relevant theoretical and empirical studies,
- A pre-test of the coding book with real samples,
- Expert consultation and revisions.

In addition, we held a research focus group meeting made up of 10 active Egyptian YouTube users, all aged 18-30. This focus group examined their viewing preferences and preferences for Jennifer, their view of short videos and channels from which they wished to highlight. Based on this focus group, it was established that the initial coding categories for analysis were both valid and valuable for this study and also allowed for the refinement of the analytical dimensionality according to real user experiences.

The integration of pilot coding, an independent coder, and direct user input through the focus group discussion strengthened the **construct validity** and contextual fit of the research design. This triangulated approach ensured that the analysis truly reflects how short video content and audience interactions shape ideological identity in Egypt's digital media environment.

Results:

RQ1 – Digital News Quality and User Behavior

Nature of news quality media and Interaction on YouTube Shorts

Table (1) Overview of YouTube Shorts Analysis

Metric	Value	Description
Total Videos Analyzed	100 videos	From 15 July 2021 to 31 July 2022
Year with Most Popular Videos	2022 (72% of videos)	High viewership due to the maturity of the platform after its launch
Dominant Content Focus	Politics (41.66%)	Highest interactivity; includes entertainment and political news
Other Content Focus	Sports (5.83%), Economics (5.4%)	Lower interactivity and viewership
Highest Viewership	174 million views	Not necessarily corresponding with high interaction
Engagement Indicators	Comments, Shares, Likes	Various interaction levels depending on the content's impact
Dislike Rate for Serious Issues	47.75%	Highest for direct political/economic topics without humor

The study identified 100 videos of the most popular reels on YouTube from 15 July 2021 to 31 July 2022 that belong to media organization channels and popular contributors to detect the Nature of news quality on those reels and the type of interaction. The year 2022 had the most popular videos on the study sample of shorts, which accounted for 72%¹ of the most viewed videos with interaction; this could be due to the release of the YouTube shorts service on 13 July 2021 globally, where January 2022 was a start for many contributors to gain millions of views through pirating vertical videos from other platforms and reposting content on YouTube Shorts. This means that the date of publication as a variable does not prevent the continued growth of the video's audience, viewership, and interaction with shorts on YouTube. Still, it gives shorts the advantage of viewing, continuity, and presence for an unlimited period.

Politics dominated the news quality issues raised by shorts, with a rate of 41.66%, with particular attention to politically entertaining news that always was able to record the highest percentage of interactivity. While sports and economic issues recorded a lower percentage, about 5.83% to 5.4% of the sample for each. This reflects the importance of political and entertaining issues for YouTube users. Although there is a great contradiction between these issues, the common feature of stirring emotions throughout sympathy and pity to feelings of anger, disgust, and hatred, so that the connection becomes both informational and psychological and emotional.

In Fact, the raised serious political issues raised on shorts were not of a great importance to the audience, but with high value of entertainment and sarcasm, it became with higher news quality value. This treatment is significant that the role of YouTube shorts is not journalistic or analytical or even informational, but rather its role in presenting different visions and new angles for the same topic as a rebranding tool to create interest towards a certain issue.

Shorts are a news quality issue that does not pass 60 seconds, targeting propaganda and rebranding issues without any need for details or enough information or even a complete news headline; just some shots, old or new, is enough to raise the trends for discussion and republishing. Till its time for users to reform what these news were about, but already it's too late because double meanings conflicting interests so if there are repercussions, they are made by adding meanings.

The viewership on the shorts of the study sample was 700 million views, where the popular channels recorded more views than media organization channels,

¹ Appendix (1) Table (7).

recording 81.85% of the views, as it exceeded 573 million views. But those numbers of views did not go in parallel with interactivity rates with shorts through comments or shares or likes as the highest shorts with viewership that recorded about 174 million views did not exceed 16 thousand comments, while another short that didn't exceed 70 million views had more than 18 thousand comments. That could be explained according to the topic shorts try poses as when it is more related to minor groups of people with a significant impact on them, it will raise more discussion throughout comments. In contrast, topics with information with global effect indirect effect will gain more likes and support as it is regularly surrounded with uncertain information and dilemma².

The lowest viewership and interactivity rates of shorts were for critical serious issues that mainly related directly to political and economical problems that presented without humor, entertainment, or even criticism; it is just plain information to record about 15% of the study sample. However, this did not prevent it from obtaining the highest dislike rate of 47.75%, outperforming the number of comments.

The fact that the most popular shorts have high levels of interactivity and viewing does not necessarily mean that the audience is impressed and obsessed with how much it carries a news quality issue or that they are convinced of the content presented. Still, it may be due to the extent to which the content is exciting, the method of processing the reception stimuli, and the ability to create a correlation between the viewer and the shorts, even if it is a bad relationship for public aversion and conflict with the displayed content.

The rate of admiration defined through likes and dislikes on the study sample of shorts exceeded 29 million likes for both popular and media organization channels; however, popular shorts obsess about 69.9% of the admiration rate compared to organizational media channels. The common feature between the whole sample is that they turned off the dislikes features on the shorts. Also, other popular shorts that view rates between 2.6 million to 6.4 million turned off the likes and dislikes features; that could be because of the type of content that really could make the trend, but it could not direct the interaction form. Also, those typical shorts stratified the comments and filtered all the content that presented attacks on the channel policies. The highest levels of viewership and interactivity are not always a good sign, as the only difference between content Affiliations and Policy is in the method of treatment, which can gain the audience's attention and arouse its interest in shorts and not just try to

² Appendix (1), Table (3)

persuade users with the news quality or control opinions and direct people thoughts³.

And through all of the above characteristics accompanying the content of the video, it becomes clear that politics and entertainment are essential factors for the success of any video on the study sample channels, whether this entertainment is through sarcasm or linking them to light issues or other treatments that achieve a culture of pluralism, also there is no temporal barrier to stop the video within certain limits. The date of its publication, the duration of its presentation, and the number of comments, interactions, and accompanying ads are not the governing tools for its possibility of achieving popularity.

News quality of short videos on YouTube

News quality of short YouTube videos are essential not only for the sake of being trendy and spread through social media short reels but also for the political implications it can have. However, defining, operationalizing, and measuring short videos news media quality is difficult because evaluative criteria are inherently contested beliefs about the ideal society, which is not really available within Arab Egyptian society.

Referring to Stuart Hall's model of coding and decoding to reveal the double concepts of hermeneutics, constructs invariably interact with meanings shared by people in digital societies. Thus, the model enables the recognition of short videos news media quality as a dynamic, contingent, and contested construct, also to find out the ideal way of delivering messages without affecting media to align specific issues along with giving it entertaining traits.

The boundaries of news quality of digital short videos can be clarified through four main qualities: the journalistic content of the media entity, including the covered issue and items; the system of digital media, the media organization, influencer, and contributor affiliation; and the type of media outlets, which all contribute to the final inferior or superior formation specific normative dimensions, criteria, and professionalism of cultural improvements and relevance.

Surprisingly, the criteria of discourse value factors in short video reels are entirely different from what is applied in traditional media news forms, as the journalistic content became more deliberative according to users' capacity to follow and understand. That means the short video reels should be produced, selected, and distributed through media organizations in accordance with

³ Appendix (1), Table (3)

generality rather than particularity and public trends rather than quality-heavy content. The content should be contextualized as newsy informative content that rebrands issues and guarantees more than just reporting information benefits of public discourse by placing it in a larger societal or political context.

Newsy short videos on YouTube interested in explaining and contextualizing events in swift messages to provide facts. At the same time, the content adheres shyly the professional journalistic standards such as objectivity, transparency, and verification to address arguments that are unlikely to evolve and prevail over the main actors, topics, and opinions to be more like branding or marketing for news trends and publicity of short videos

The content analysis coding schemes for short videos on YouTube and comments is to assess the digital news quality of the audience and media organization, which depend on direct democratical potentials for popular initiatives and referendums, necessitate strong interactivity towards political and entertainment issues covered by short videos and reels on YouTube.

Dimensions of YouTube short's relevance depend on trendy topics and actors' relevance, where general news ideas according to the issues take precedence over other topics, specifically social issues. The ideal normative of news media quality in shorts is concerned with contexts that detach culture and widen perspectives, public values, and ideals that contribute to function deliberative participatory models of identity formation and conceptual difficulties in applying news trends quality.

The study detected that the news quality of YouTube shorts in Arab Egyptian society could be evaluated through a set of criteria including acceptance, diversity, lawfulness, clarity, completeness, and relevance. In contrast, professionalism, completeness, balance, objectivity, factuality, and neutrality do not really affect the news trends' quality of YouTube channels, but they expand pertinent criteria for related cultures and societies.

Boundaries of news quality in shorts depend on the most general sense of journalistic content where news media items follow the organizational system or the inferior contributors of media outlets on YouTube. Sometimes, news quality narrows the boundaries of YouTube's shorts themes, ideals, and criteria to concentrate on cultural identity context and transparent perspectives contingency.

Factors affect digital media news quality and cultural aspects

The most popular newsy reels on YouTube have many characteristics and features that put them at the forefront of the favorite and attractive shorts for YouTube users. Some of these features were positive, while others were negative and lacked credibility and often resorted to socially unacceptable practices or ideas. Despite that they were always popular among users, their news quality reflects the private virtual culture of Egyptian society, which has a continuous conflict with Egyptian ideology and identity reformation throughout the applicable digital media culture on various platforms.

The study found that no channel has more popular reels than others, as trendy news ideas and topics are a kind of industry that depends on manufacturing hot topics that obtain the most significant number of views and interactions. However, media organizations were able to keep competing on trends through two main factors: the number of subscriptions and seniority of being on the top of the most viewed channels on YouTube. On the other hand, trends created and demolished through influencers and contributors dependent on other factors mainly adopting social indication of Egyptian culture and nominating fears of intellectual and political dilemmas, which always succeed in mobilizing beliefs to support them in creating trends. Accordingly, the study refuses the assumption of competition between popular and organizational channels, as both of them require Utilitarian exchange to access the quality of the news trends despite the apparent conflict.

These practices have made News quality on social media reels, such as objectivity and credibility, one of the most prominent elements that are not specifically required as main factors; other times, it may turn into a point of ridicule and a source of exposure to criticism and poor performance. Controversial topics that were considered taboo within Egyptian society became a source for trends, in addition to unstable political topics that were considered to push a certain idea that may agree or disagree with ideological identity.

Thus, we have many different media messages and treatments on the same issues and problems, and the difference lies in the method of encoding and decoding media messages by the public. This means repetition of scenes with a difference in the method of presentation and treatment, and this may be due to the goals and positions of each of them regarding the issues, the pattern of ownership, and the adopted political trends.

Through the qualitative analysis of YouTube shorts, several elements are considered to play a role in encoding news quality trendy message:

1. The newsy content and the quality idea of video to be popular.
2. The source of the message and the process of communication either organizational or popular influencers.
3. Users and contributors who receive the message and densify the meaning.
4. Recipients feedback and impact on regenerating of light private meanings.
5. Confusion over trendy topics and actual meanings.

These five elements are devoted during the production of news quality media messages, even if the creators have different practices differ in encoding processes that follow goals and ownership patterns. Therefore, the meanings are multiplied, the opposition appears, and the process of interacting with the message and how to extrapolate it differs as a news quality content.

Cultural level of prioritizing on YouTube shorts news quality

Shorts news quality is concerned with hot topics that are known as trendy, keeping an eye on the political, economical, and social ramifications. In contrast, cultural levels reprioritize to follow the current state of the digital media system, including double hermeneutics of Egyptian ideological identity and operationalizing entertaining news quality, to let people construct news qualities of dynamic and contingent on the condition of contested digital interaction.

The challenges of news quality research are to define the fundamental factors of digital news quality cultural aspects. Still, the deliberative outline and boundaries, users' perceptions can't be in relation to normative understandings of scientists as it provides short-scale versions of measuring audience perceptions of news quality as a deliberative perspective.

Shorts have various modes of digital communication, as in the broadest sense, the use of meaning exchange between netizens through the use of symbols; the most common are verbal and written words, while nonverbal communication can express more.

According to Egyptian social retain, cultural levels encompass various values that may differ and regenerate. Changes and challenges of the overall news quality dynamics significantly impact identity reformatting on digital media platforms. The instrumentalization and digitalization of ideological identity in this age made users reform abstraction of real life and acquisitions of virtual identities through digital mediums to a significant change in cultural concept and its effect on identity reformation.

Youtube Reels emerge as a modern structure of social media news with the characteristics of internet-mediated information and technologies. It has the potential to incorporate even more in its own technological context. With the widespread use of newsy short video reels media, the concept of public space has entered a new era.

YouTube Shorts and the Reengineering of journalism news quality

The study found a significant influence of YouTube shorts as a social media platform on Egyptian and Arab journalism and culture that exceeds the shift of transferring from traditional media news to digital media news practices. The rapid takeover of technology companies and artificial intelligence programs went beyond the distribution role to control and predict audience attention and predict sentiment reactions to new types of journalism algorithms that flourish with different news quality. The new technology forced regular media organizations to practice journalism through third party platforms, to restructure news qualities and formats with no guarantee to get users attention that always pushed towards trends and rebranding information.

the research found that Shorts news quality emerges through accelerating content viral mode, through increasing popularity rates, reach, and wider significance of news media events digitally, where users are encouraged to participate to boost news with common interests. The YouTube shorts platformization logic of news quality coding, and decoding process relies on valuability, visibility, reliability, and being shareable.

Thus the visibility of Shorts accelerates and expands a story's dissemination and lends it more validity, ensuring that it will circulate beyond the original social networks. A loop of this nature provides a continual flow of virtual news media events into the news feeds of any site that employs algorithmic curating. Hence, picking which news or event to share becomes a kind of "best of" selection, impacting the rate at which stories spread and the overall reach across the plethora of internet-based distribution through media platforms.

organizational and popular channels of YouTube adapting short videos practices to accommodate commercially evolving platform ecologies, that offer faster communicative styles, temporal trends accelerations and competitive negotiations with others platforms with the same advantages and technologies.

Thus YouTube shorts shifted cultural production approaches of news highlight quality, using mixed art material and integrated data text including titles and hashtags, where shorts creators and users are chasing each other to discern the same news content material through virtual entertaining experience using

algorithmic mediatization approach that indicate related visible content to both stakeholders and users.

The YouTube algorithm-driven news affected the news quality of shorts which is completely different from the qualities of non-algorithmic news sources, where shorts always compete to unlimited attention of users that redefines engaging experience.

As the influences of the media are not only to be found within the communication sequence of senders, messages, and receivers, but also in the changing relationship between the media and other cultural and social spheres, that made mediatization essential in understanding the adjustment of journalism practice in social media platforms. The emergence of journalism in social media networks as a result of mediatization affects the media's function to effectively and constantly work with changing social ideological identity. As a result, changes in journalism are influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural values. As a result, the massive shift of journalism on social media influences journalism practice, where the anticipated obstacles have been met from the beginning of applying the practice in new platforms, presenting drastic changes with original material. Regardless of these considerations, the practice of journalistic legitimacy remains a critical component in understanding how news production on social media has evolved.

RQ2 – Topics and Comments

Comments Ideological Identity, and Digital Content Culture Derivatives

The study found three main characteristics of YouTube shorts that are mainly related to contemporary digital culture, first spreads cultural information from one person to another as a social phenomenon that shapes social groups' mindsets, forms behaviors and actions based on the propagation of content from user to another to serve as different news quality paths to foster and governing media consumption.

A second attribute of Shorts is that they reproduce by various means of imitation through visual and verbal communication. Users repackaging them to create their version of awareness and cultural acceptance, using remixing inspiration and imitations to capture a wide range of communicative intentions and actions, spanning from naïve copying to scornful imitation, Keeping the broad umbrella of informative news quality techniques.

The third characteristic is their diffusion through competition and selection, where digital culture traces are constantly aggregated for all users to be a

visible part of the process, allowing for its investigation in unprecedented ways to confirm news quality procedures or represent news information.

The nature of comments content on the YouTube shorts varied between 7 types: Informational & Newsy, Compliments and encouragement, Opinions and points of view, Guidance and advice, Inquiry and request, Cursing and using offensive words, Mockery and sarcasm, and Teasing. Shorts could belong to two or more types; however, most of the shorts recorded the highest rate in presenting informational and newsy content at 26.8%, while opinion and viewpoints recorded 21.44%, the rest types recorded very close rates that did not exceed 15% while compliments and teasing rated between 1% to 2.5%⁴.

Table (2) Examples of the 7 types of comment content

Type	Arabic Example	English Translation
Informational & Newsy	الخبر أكيد بس التفاصيل ناقصة وفي فيديوهات نشرها الناس على صفحاتهم	The news is certain, but the details are missing, and there are videos posted by people on their pages.
	الناس لسه بتطالب بحقها وهيقولوا هنعوضهم وفي الآخر محدش خد جنيه بقالنا سنين على الحال دة	People are still demanding their rights and saying we will compensate them, but in the end no one has taken a single penny. We have been in this situation for years.
	اللي بيحصل ده طبيعي وتكراره معناها مغيث حاجة بتتغير ومحدش عنده استعداد يحمل نفسه مسئولية	What is happening is normal and its recurrence means that nothing is changing and no one is willing to take responsibility.
	الناس كلها بتتكلم عن نفس الحكاية من امبارح في مل القنوات والصحف الاجنبية	Everyone has been talking about the same story since yesterday on all foreign channels and newspapers.
	خبر كل سنة في نفس التوقيت والآخر هيطلعوا يقولوا كله تحت السيطرة متقلقوش يا جماعة دة خبر روتيني	Every year at the same time, they come out and say everything is under control. Don't worry, guys. This is routine news.
	محدش هيجاسب حد كالعادة "ده أصلاً تريند على تيك توك اليومين دول"	No one will hold anyone accountable as usual. This is actually trending on TikTok these days.
	الله ينور عليك يا معلم	Good job mate!
Compliments & Encouragement	بجد شغل عالي اوي منك	Really top quality work from you
	انت دايماً بتجيب المفيد 🙌	You always share useful stuff 🙌
	والله الفيديو رائع	Really, the video is amazing
	أفضل محتوى شفته اليوم	Best content I've seen today
	ربي يوفقك ويزيدك	May God grant you more success
	أحسننت ومنتظر المزيد	Well done, waiting for more

⁴ Appendix (1), Table (14)

Opinions & Points of View	برأيي الوضع صعب يتغير	In my opinion, the situation won't change
	أعتقد لازم نتحرك بسرعة	I think we must act fast
	أتوقع الحكومة تتصرف قريب	I expect the government to act soon
	رأيي الشخصي الموضوع مبالغ فيه	My personal opinion is the issue is exaggerated
	أشوف إنه تصرف غير مسؤول	I see this as irresponsible behaviour
	من وجهة نظري الحل سهل	From my point of view the solution is simple
	ما أتفق معك أبداً	I completely disagree with you
Guidance & Advice	ياريت تتأكدوا قبل ما تصدقوا أي حد	Please check before you believe anyone
	لو سمحتوا شاركو الفيديو عشان الناس تعرف	Please share the video so people know
	انصحك المرة الجاية تدور على أكثر من مصدر	I advise you next time to look for more sources
	متصدقش كل حاجة ينتقال	Don't believe everything that's said
	ياريت تتأكدوا قبل ما تصدقوا أي حد	Please check before you believe anyone
	انتبهوا يا جماعة للسلامة	Guys, watch out for safety
	أنصحك تحذف الفيديو لو فيه خطأ	I advise you to delete the video if it's wrong
Inquiry & Request	ممكن رابط الخبر الأصلي؟	Could you share the original link?
	فين باقي الفيديو؟	Where's the rest of the video?
	هل عندك مصدر موثوق؟	Do you have a trusted source?
	وين صور ثانية؟	Where are other pictures?
	تقدر ترفع الفيديو بجودة أعلى؟	Can you upload it in higher quality?
	ممكن تفاصيل أكثر؟	Can we have more details?
	فين المصادر اللي بتأكد الكلام دة ياريت حد يقولنا	Where are the sources that confirm this? I wish someone would tell us.
Cursing & Offensive Words	انت كذاب ومش محترم	You're a liar and disrespectful
	هو انت فاكر الناس عبيطة؟	Do you think people are stupid?
	ياريت تسكت وتريحنا	I wish you'd shut up and spare us
	كلامك كله هجص وتضليل	Your words are nonsense and misleading
	اللي مصدقك يبقى أغبي منك	Anyone who believes you is dumber than you
	صعب الانسان يعيش في حالة لازم كل واحد جاهل يطلع يعملك علامة	It is difficult for a person to live in a situation where every ignorant person has to come out and make a mark on you.
	روح العب بعيد	Go play somewhere else
Mockery &	ايوه انت فاهم كل حاجة هههه عبقري زمانك ما شاء الله	Oh yeah, you know everything, hahaha, Genius of your time, mashallah

Sarcasm	يا عم انت عايش فين 😊 انت في مصر مش في المدينة الفاضلة	Where do you live, man? You're in Egypt, not in Medina.	
	شاطر قوي يعني اضحكنا والله	Oh so clever, huh? You really made us laugh	
	"اسمع جعجعة ولا أرى طحنا	"All talk, no action"	
	تحب نعمل من الفسيخ شربات ولا نرقص على السلم وكله بثمانه عشان احنا خلاص عمينها	Would you like to make sherbet from the feseekh or dance on the stairs and all at a price because we are already blind?	
	يا سلام على التحليل الفخم طيب جرب انت هههه	Wow, what a fancy analysis Okay, you try it then hahaha	
	اسكت أحسن لك ههه	Better be quiet, haha	
Teasing	والله ضحككتني وبردوا مش هنوصل لحاجة	You really made me laugh, and we still won't get anywhere.	
	كله بيهرج وأنت لازم تصدق طيب أنت مصدق نفسك	It's all just nonsense, and you have to believe it. Well, you believe yourself.	
	دمك خفيف بس دماغك ثقيلة ولازم نعمل عملية احلال وتركيب	You're funny, but your brain is heavy, and we need to do a replacement and installation operation.	
	هههه عشم ابليس بالجنة	Hahaha, the devil hopes for heaven.	
	خلينا نشوفك تعملها ولا	Let's see you do it	
	انت بطل الفضاء هههه	You're a space hero hahaha	
	هجين النظارة بتاعتي عشان مش عارف اسمعك	I'll get my glasses because I can't hear you.	

Table (2) comments 7 types on youtube shorts

The culture presented by comments on YouTube shorts did not stop at the use of extraneous profanity and words of Mockery and ridicule but instead tried to develop itself in multiple ways, which is often a push-and-pull method to adhere to certain morals and social values, and another that tries to deviate from the ordinary at all costs. Regardless of the costs, but the most important thing is in This conflict. The purpose of the incoherent presentation between the comments is to maintain challenge, controversy, and competition, even if culture is lost or we are compelled to fragment and violate principles, customs, and social and human values.

Despite the different categories of the contents of the under-study comments, they share standard features in the direction and method of handling, relying on the same evidence, the same subject of interest, and the same point of view that caused the commentary to take a critical, supportive, or indignant direction, deviating from the topic and personalizing it, or even entering into matters of the personal, philosophical, and irrelevant.

In addition, the majority of the sexual, defiant, threatening, and warning comments focused on claiming knowledge of public figures, presenting information and the strengths and weaknesses of the videos' contents, and using implausible evidence presented in other videos that spread rumors and false information. Nevertheless, it depends on the significance of the issue raised for the user to make efforts to ensure that comments and videos contain relevant information. Strangely, every good or positive comment must be followed by a nasty or negative one.

The intersection of ideological identity and digital content culture is complex and multifaceted, with numerous potential derivatives. Ideological identity refers to a person's or group's set of beliefs, values, and attitudes, which are shaped by factors such as culture, religion, politics, and personal experiences. In contrast, digital content culture refers to the shared practices, values, and norms that have developed around creating, distributing, and consuming online content.

This intersection gives rise to echo chambers and filter bubbles. Individuals and groups seek out and engage with digital content that reinforces their beliefs and values while ignoring or rejecting content that challenges them. This can result in the polarization of opinions and the formation of distinct ideological communities, detrimental to social cohesion and democratic discourse.

The rise of algorithmic curation and personalization of digital content is another consequence that can exacerbate echo chambers and filter bubbles. Using algorithms to recommend content to users based on their browsing history, search queries, and other data points can result in a lack of exposure to diverse viewpoints and narrow perspectives.

In addition, the intersection of ideological identity and digital content culture can lead to online hate speech, harassment, and disinformation. Digital platforms' anonymity and separation can encourage individuals to engage in harmful behavior and spread false information, which can have real-world repercussions.

Overall, the intersection of the ideological identity of users and digital content culture as news quality information is a complicated and ongoing issue that requires close consideration. Encouraging diverse viewpoints, promoting critical thinking and media literacy, and fostering open and respectful dialogue across ideological divides are essential.

Language processing trends and cultural affiliations sources

Digital media have drastically changed the communication language practices within Egyptian society, not only in the matter of social, personal, and corporate communication, but also it has become a way to improve altered lifestyles, social belonging, and an effective method to end oriental relation to origins, religion, beliefs and identity.

The study finds a linguistic conflict between Egyptian generation languages where discussion and comments interaction holds various points of views that can be justified with different motives and proves according to mental beliefs and belonging. The Arabic language topped the list of shorts spoken languages with the interference of some foreign words belonging to English and French language to record about this could be due to using foreign names and terms while providing and interpreting news context, while the Arabic used was not classical spoken language it was a mix between Egyptian colloquial and Arab dialect of classical language. That could be justified as elites and educated groups always try to rely on distinction and give an illusion of advancement and culture, and it is an advanced means to deceive the recipient and achieve the highest level of persuasion and confidence in what is presented. Apparently, the main goal is to provide cognitive context while it creates a process of turmoil, uncertainty, and a sense of incomprehension and inferiority, thus relying on the knowledge provided and shaping perception and awareness based on the sources and mechanisms provided by the channel.

YouTube Shorts used headlines, quotations, and captions to clarify videos content as a translation format written on the videos or within the description to cut short from the main idea of the video to rate Arabic translation by 22%, while from English to Arabic rated 14% as the videos already do not belong to middle east countries. Also, the study detected using English descriptions and captions for Arabic videos by 13%, which is not an insignificant percentage as it was only used by channels that started to take some steps after the growth of viewership and interactivity rates⁵.

On the other hand, the language of the comments recorded very close numbers to the videos, where the public Egyptian language was the most commonly used between users by 64%, while mixed languages that carries more than one language rated 16.9%, with scarcity to find popular comments with classical Arabic or slangs of other Arab countries or foreign language⁶.

⁵ Appendix (1), Table (15)

⁶ Appendix (1), Table (18)

Criticizing the news quality of YouTube shorts through comments is currently a major way people interact with civil and political issues and reinforce social alignments around shared values through surrounding cultural affiliation. But the used languages reflects certain forms of entertainment carrying a type of sarcasm or mocking serious news even if they address serious issues, but that could be explained through the concept of “entertainment resonance” to explain the way in which this news spreads as a type of semiotic "weapon" on social media sites and online websites.

The language processing in YouTube shorts and comments is evolving to be applied in different Cultural affiliations contexts, to express new ideological identities that belong to various individuals or ethnic groups, where media platforms are just a space for people to establish connections with people that are similar to them culturally, values, beliefs, and interests.

The users of YouTube shorts use hashtags related to their cultural background or share content that reflects their cultural heritage or traditions to reply to the news from the core of their cultural identity beliefs. While the cultural affiliation of short news quality is pushing the way to form online subcultures that differ from the mainstream culture to provide a sense of belonging to marginalized offline culture that only attacks the classical forms of ideological identities of Egyptian youth.

So language diversity leads to creating echo chambers of cultural affiliation where users are not only exposed to perspectives and ideas that reinforce their existing beliefs and biases but also query mainstream culture and identity. This can lead to a feeling of belonging and empathy towards those who hold different cultural beliefs or identities or the feeling of lack of understanding and violence.

It is clear from these results that the encoding and decoding processes depend mainly on symbols in the production of the media message, new meanings, and concepts, where sending and receiving messages represents an essential and influential element for building cultural and social systems by taking communication in several different forms, whether verbal, linguistic, semi-verbal or Semi-linguistic, and with the extensive use of symbols, communication systems become highly complex and independent, so that language and symbols are functionally linked to the development of culture.

The results reflect a new news reality for hypothetical categories that are interested in superficial information far from depth and detail through a system of displaying correct and frequent information that cannot be questioned, but is devoid of analytical aspects or contexts surrounding events. This is done

through frequent watching of YouTube shorts with highly valued data flow and quality, which adhere to Egyptian society's social, cultural, and religious nature. Still, it forces a different way of acting with large doses of immorality, pornography, and inferiority that outweigh the amount of moral and religious material related to society, and that is all totally the opposite of what happens inside the comments.

RQ3 – Ideological Identity

Egyptian Digital Identity and Cultural Netizen-ship

Based on digital ethnography analysis of YouTube shorts, this study analyzes how news quality reinterprets and redefines the ideological identity of Egyptian youth through digital media practices and discourse culture, building different digital identities. The results strengthened and rendered the construction of the digital institutional image of popular and organizational channels to build a mixed identity that goes beyond the framework defined by the media performance of traditional roles.

The news shorts services and promotion became a source for creating authentic communities with oriented identities that assist in resolving challenges of particular groups and generate benefits. While news publicity of an act or a celebrity or an idea played a role in constructing identities that depend on differentiation and social distance under a more significant aim of supporting being distinguished.

A journalistic algorithm is a computer program or set of rules that is designed to assist journalists in the process of gathering, analyzing, and presenting news stories. These algorithms can be used to automate certain tasks, such as data mining and analysis, fact-checking, and content creation. They can also be used to help journalists identify patterns, trends, and insights in large data sets or social media feeds.

One example of a journalistic algorithm is using natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning to analyze news articles and identify patterns in language and sentiment. which can help journalists identify emerging trends and public opinions, and can also assist in detecting fake news and propaganda.

Another example is the use of algorithms to automate the creation of news stories or summaries. These algorithms can use templates and data inputs to generate news stories on various topics, such as sports, finance, and politics. While these algorithms can help news organizations produce content more efficiently, there are concerns about the impact on the quality and accuracy of the news.

It is important to note that journalistic algorithms are not a replacement for human journalists and their editorial judgment. Algorithms can assist journalists in specific tasks, but they cannot replace the critical thinking and creativity that is required for influential journalism. Therefore, the use of algorithms in journalism should be accompanied by a strong commitment to ethical and professional standards, including transparency and accountability.

Egyptian digital identity and cultural citizenship through online presence and representation of individuals and communities to participate fully in the digital world while maintaining their cultural identity and values. This includes the creation and dissemination of cultural content and the ability to access and consume cultural content from around the world.

However, some challenges come with digital identity and cultural citizenship. For example, spreading misinformation and fake news can negatively impact both individual and cultural identities. Additionally, the digital divide, which refers to unequal access to digital technologies and the internet, can limit the ability of some Egyptians to participate in the digital world and be affected or adapt to foreign cultures or even middle eastern arab countries that strongly exist online, especially Saudi Arabia.

Shorts News Quality coding and decoding in the process of meaning production

YouTube Shorts deliver personalized communication messages most appropriate for users in a time that does not exceed 60 seconds. The New Digital Media Culture forces recreating words, meanings, and concepts of Egyptian slang and Arabic languages used through audio-visual interactive video to convey informative newsy messages.

The real purpose of this digital media culture is not to stay connected or exchange data or information; it is about redesigning virtual reality cultural meanings, personal attachments, and language dependence to stay under digital control, even if it is away from digital communication monitoring. This process takes place through formatting and approving the perfect way of receiving and reacting to conceptual meanings, attitudes, and moral and digital ritual beliefs that control shorts' digitized media news quality.

The study found YouTube shorts used symbols, profanities, and allusions in video samples with a percentage that exceeded the original rates of scenes and clips, to record 407 as a total number in both organizational and popular channels of the YouTube shorts sample⁷. Where symbols were recorded

⁷ Appendix (1), Table (13).

35.13% let allusions and revelations take possession to record 47.91%, while the word Profanity rated 16.95%. The percentage of dependence on the category of symbols increased in the encoding and decoding of various media messages by YouTube shorts, and this may be due to the number of meanings and concepts that these symbols can communicate clearly without the need for further explanation, interpretation, and re-framing of media messages.

The reels under study used many types of Profanity and words with more than one meaning, purpose, and intellectual direction to record a type of news quality. Despite the simplicity of the words youtube shorts rely on, they add dimensions and details more related to YouTube users in a newsy way. Still, with the repetition of these profanities, it is natural that they give new meanings to the exact words and concepts. These meanings gradually separate from their reality, their recipients, and those who transmit them to create new meanings that do not relate to time, place, people, or subjects.

The video sample of the study focused on using light Political and security terms more than the scientific and new colloquial terms. Also, shorts tried to present new definitions of well-known words, such as the terms related to accusations of treason and conspiracy can be described with words such as Zionist-Western culture, Anglo-Turatic thought, Freemasonry and a metamorphosis, while conspiracies and machinations can be described with words such as biological wars /sedition/ creative chaos/ psychological warfare/ war of rumors/ digital media wars/brainwashing/ abusing schemes.

There are several new political terms related to YouTube shorts and comments that have emerged in recent years; here are a few examples: 1)Cancel culture refers to the practice of withdrawing support or "canceling" individuals or entities who have expressed or acted upon controversial or unpopular opinions or beliefs. 2)Deplatforming refers to the practice of removing an individual or organization's access to a social media platform or other online venue, often as a result of violating the platform's terms of service or community guidelines. 3)Astroturfing refers to the practice of creating the impression of grassroots support for a political cause or, candidate or opinion through the use of fake accounts or coordinated social media campaigns.4)Dogwhistle politics refers to the use of coded language or symbolism to communicate a political message to a particular audience, often without explicitly stating the message. 5)Filter bubble refers to the phenomenon of being surrounded by online content that reinforces one's existing beliefs and opinions, thereby limiting exposure to opposing viewpoints. 6)Trolling refers to the practice of deliberately posting provocative or offensive comments online with the intention of stirring up controversy or eliciting a strong reaction from others. 7)Flame war refers to a

heated and often personal argument that takes place in the comments section of an online forum or social media platform.

The study found that YouTube shorts used allusions and revelations as common elements of news quality to provide context, add depth, and create a connection with the audience. The study divided it into Physical suggestion, Emotional suggestiveness, Mental suggestion, Spiritual suggestion and Self-suggestion to record over 47.9% where emotions and self suggestions are the highest⁸.

Some examples: **Emotional Suggestiveness:** The “*Sudan Coup Report*” (Al Hadath) relies on striking protest footage and an intense narration style to stir feelings of sympathy and political awareness. The “*Gaza Aid Blockade*” (Al Jazeera) shows raw, unfiltered scenes of families under siege, along with heartfelt interviews meant to evoke solidarity. Similarly, “*Women’s Rights in Egypt*” (Alhayah) mixes images of protesting women with powerful slogans and stirring background music to draw out empathy and moral support.

Self-Suggestion: The “*Youth & Cancel Culture*” short (Logical Talk Channel) drives its message home with repeated calls like “Reject cancel culture” and “Stand for your ideas.” The satirical “*Censorship Laws*” video (Pulse of the Arabs Channel) uses humor — lines like “Wake up before your voice is muted” — to spark viewers’ critical thinking about government control. Meanwhile, “*Social Media & Youth Identity*” (Political Talk Channel) wraps up with on-screen prompts that urge, “Your identity is yours — protect it online.”

Physical Suggestion: The “*Egyptian Protest Crackdown*” (Sky News Arabia) shows protesters clashing with security forces, with raised fists and defiant gestures symbolizing physical resistance. The “*Youth Protests Vlog*” (Citizen Saeed) captures activists marching and chanting with signs, emphasizing collective presence and community defiance. The “*Arab League Summit Highlights*” (Sky News Arabia) focuses on the official body language — handshakes and gestures — that symbolize regional unity and cooperation.

Mental Suggestion: The “*Al-Daheeh: Conspiracy Theories*” episode (Al-Daheeh) illustrates manipulation tactics through clever rhetorical puzzles and open-ended questions, encouraging viewers to find hidden meanings. The “*Al-Waei Noor: Coded Words*” short (Al-Waei Noor) layers symbols and wordplay to push audiences to decode double meanings. In the “*Al-Daheeh: Trend*

⁸ Appendix (1), Table (16).

Hacking” clip (Political Analysis Channel), viewers are prompted to question viral media trends using flowcharts and what-if scenarios.

Spiritual Suggestion: The “*Sisi’s Speech on Religious Identity*” (Extra News) blends political policy with Quranic verses and moral frames, tying national loyalty to religious duty. The “*Hijab Ban in Schools*” (Free Opinion Channel) overlays religious arguments and Quranic references to frame the debate as both a moral and spiritual matter. Lastly, “*Satire: Regime & Religion*” (Al-Haqiqa As It Is Channel) uses religious symbols and slogans to show how political narratives often tap into faith to make their point.

The allusions included Historical events that provide context for current events, such as political conflicts and demonstrations, while Pop culture allusions used to help the audience understand a complex issue or make a point, such as a political scandal might use a clip from a popular TV show or movie to illustrate the point using popular song lyric, a well-known movie quote, or a viral internet meme. Also, the literary and cultural references allusions used to literature, art, or other forms of culture to provide context or add depth to a story, such as quotes from famous experts or philosophers to provide context.

The revelations included investigative reporting, interviews, and analysis, which often revealed new information, exposed wrongdoing, or provided new insights or perspectives that were not previously considered.

Further, Catchphrases, Hashtags, Political references, and Language play are used as forms of linguistic creativity to add humor or emphasis to a message, attract audiences who are interested in a particular topic or trend, and create a sense of relevance and urgency. This always happens in political, sarcastic content, such as a reference to a recent news story or using a political slogan or catchphrase to express or support a point of view.

In contrast, the user comments section recorded high usage of symbols at 51%, and words profanity at 35% , while Allusions and Revelations rated the lowest at 14%. The real difference depends on the news quality content within the shorts, as what might be appropriate and related may be abusive and manipulative in other Shorts, so it always depends on mindful tone and context to express real quality⁹.

The findings demonstrated that there are notable variations between the process of encoding and decoding the media message on YouTube shorts that tries try to provide deeper content that reflects the strength of the connection between the culture of digital media and ideological identity through several elements,

⁹ Appendix (1), Table (13).

the most important of which is the transfer of knowledge and the provision of different interpretations of the behaviors, actions, and feelings that appear through the videos.

In the end, the message reaches the recipient within a wide range of new variable contents, concepts, and meanings, directed and undirected, in another attempt to discover the meanings and reveal the conflict between the recipient and attempts to dominate new cultures within a group of ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and rituals entrenched in the environment surrounding the recipient and the media.

Also, symbols, words, Profanity, and allusions participated digitally as practical tools that transfer knowledge, consolidate ideas and actions, and attract the audience. Besides, the mediator's role is to produce new words with more developed or degraded cultures to be determined and framed through the party that has the most influence on the medium "Trends," whether it is the encoding or decoding process. So, the parallel worlds are a result of the interaction of different cultures between the communicator or the receiving audience, whether it is acceptable or not, to start imposing and adopting meanings, behaviors, and feelings that are more intense, strict, and naive than what the media was used to before.

Digital Language: The Dissolution of Traditional Language Borders

The new technology forced regular media organizations to practice journalism through third-party platforms to restructure news qualities and formats without guarantee of getting users' attention that always pushed toward trends and rebranding information.

The research found that Shorts news quality emerges through accelerating content viral mode, through increasing popularity rates, reach, and broader significance of news media events digitally, where users are encouraged to participate to boost news with common interests. The YouTube shorts platformization logic of news quality coding and the decoding process relies on evaluability, visibility, and reliability and is shareable.

Thus, the visibility of Shorts accelerates and expands a story's dissemination and lends it more validity, ensuring that it will circulate beyond the original social networks. A loop of this nature provides a continual flow of virtual news media events into the news feeds of any site that employs algorithmic curating. Hence, picking which news or event to share becomes a kind of "best of" selection, impacting the rate at which stories spread and the overall reach across the plethora of internet-based distribution through media platforms.

Organizational and popular channels of YouTube adapting short video practices to accommodate commercially evolving platform ecologies that offer faster communicative styles, temporal trend accelerations, and competitive negotiations with other platforms with the same advantages and technologies.

Thus, YouTube shorts shifted cultural production approaches of news highlight quality, using mixed art material and integrated data text, including titles and hashtags, where shorts creators and users are chasing each other to discern the same news content material through virtual entertaining experience using algorithmic mediatization approach that indicate related visible content to both stakeholders and users.

The YouTube algorithm-driven news affected the news quality of shorts, which is entirely different from the qualities of non-algorithmic news sources, where shorts always compete for to unlimited attention of users that redefines engaging experience.

The influences of the media are not only to be found within the communication sequence of senders, messages, and recipients in addition to the evolving dynamic between the media and other social and cultural domains, which made mediatization essential in understanding the adjustment of journalism practice in social media platforms. The emergence of journalism in social media networks as a result of mediatization affects the media's function to effectively and constantly work with changing social ideological identity. As a result, changes in journalism are influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural values. As a result, the massive shift of journalism on social media influences journalism practice, where the anticipated obstacles have been met from the beginning of applying the practice in new platforms, presenting drastic changes with original material. Regardless of these considerations, the practice of journalistic legitimacy remains a critical component in understanding how news production on social media has evolved.

The study investigation into the reorientation of Egyptian identity through digital media platforms reveals a significant transformation in language dynamics, characterized by the dissolution of traditional language borders. This section of the research results delves into how digital language, emerging from the interaction on platforms like YouTube Shorts, contributes to this phenomenon, highlighting its implications for cultural exchange, identity formation, and news quality.

The analysis identified a pervasive influence of digital language across YouTube Shorts, where traditional linguistic boundaries are increasingly blurred. This influence manifests in several vital aspects.

First, the Hybrid Language Use Content analysis of YouTube Shorts and user comments reveals a hybridization of languages, where English, Arabic, and various dialects coalesce. This linguistic blend facilitates broader communication and reflects a globalized digital culture transcending national and linguistic boundaries.

Also, The prevalence of translation tools and subtitles in multiple languages on YouTube Shorts significantly broadens the accessibility of content. This development has democratized information access, enabling users from various language backgrounds to interact with the material previously beyond their reach.

The digital language landscape fosters an enriched cultural exchange, as users are exposed to and interact with diverse cultural and linguistic content. This exposure is instrumental in shaping contemporary Egyptian identity, which increasingly incorporates elements from global digital culture.

Dissolving traditional language borders through digital language has profound implications for news quality and cultural identity. The hybrid language environment on digital platforms challenges traditional news quality norms. Content creators often prioritize engagement over linguistic accuracy, leading to a new form of news quality that values relatability and accessibility.

The fusion of languages on digital media platforms contributes to the evolution of Egyptian cultural identity. This new identity is more fluid, reflecting a blend of local traditions and global digital culture. The ease of crossing linguistic borders fosters a sense of global citizenship among Egyptian users, redefining what it means to be part of the digital age.

The findings highlight the transformative role of digital language in dissolving traditional linguistic boundaries, with significant repercussions for news dissemination, cultural exchange, and identity reorientation in Egyptian society. The digital language phenomenon underscores a shift towards a more interconnected global digital community, where linguistic diversity is not a barrier but a conduit for richer cultural interactions and identity formation. This evolution poses new challenges and opportunities for content creators and audiences alike as they navigate the complex landscape of digital media to redefine news quality and cultural identity in the digital era.

Digital Diasporas and cultural abuse

Digital diasporas refer to communities of people who share a common cultural or ethnic background but who are dispersed across different geographic locations and maintain their connections through digital communication

technologies. While these online communities can provide a sense of belonging and support for their members, they can also be vulnerable to cultural abuse.

Cultural abuse can occur when members of a dominant culture appropriate or exploit elements of a minority culture without respect for their origins or meaning. In the context of digital diasporas, this can manifest as the commodification or distortion of cultural practices, symbols, or artifacts, often for commercial or entertainment purposes.

For example, popular social media platforms have been criticized for allowing non-Native people to use Native American headdresses or other cultural items as costumes or accessories without understanding their spiritual and cultural significance to Native American communities. This kind of cultural appropriation can trivialize or disrespect the traditions and identities of marginalized groups, perpetuating stereotypes and erasing their experiences.

Therefore, it is essential for digital platforms to establish guidelines and policies that respect cultural diversity and prevent cultural abuse. This can include educating users about cultural sensitivity and appropriate behavior, providing tools to report offensive content, and working with cultural experts and community representatives to ensure that digital spaces are inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives and experiences.

The Egyptian culture diaspora refers to the spread and diffusion of Egyptian culture and traditions beyond the borders of Egypt through the migration and settlement of Egyptian people in different parts of the world. This diaspora can be traced back to ancient times, when Egyptians migrated to neighboring regions, such as Nubia, the Levant, and the Mediterranean, and established colonies and trading posts.

In modern times, the Egyptian diaspora has expanded globally, with significant populations in Europe, North America, Australia, and the Middle East. These communities have preserved and promoted Egyptian culture through various means, including food, music, dance, language, and religious practices. They have also formed organizations and cultural centers to support and connect with other Egyptians abroad and to raise awareness about their cultural heritage.

The Egyptian diaspora has played a significant role in promoting cultural exchange and diversity and has contributed to enriching the global cultural landscape.

Summary:

This research shows that digital media — especially YouTube Shorts and the lively comment sections they generate — is playing a powerful role in reshaping Egyptian social and ideological identity. By focusing on short video formats and the interactions they spark, the study makes clear that these platforms aren't just quick news outlets; they're active spaces where culture is negotiated and identities are constantly reworked.

One of the key takeaways is that digital platforms today favor engagement and relatability over classic journalistic principles like objectivity or depth. This shift echoes what earlier research has suggested: in the digital age, news quality isn't just defined by professional standards anymore — it's shaped by audiences, algorithms, and how platforms work behind the scenes. On Shorts, humor, sarcasm, symbols, and coded language have become core tools for giving news its meaning and viral power, reinforcing and expanding on Stuart Hall's coding/decoding model and ideas from mediatization theory.

The study also shows how language use in Shorts — mixing everyday Egyptian Arabic with foreign words — breaks down old language barriers, reflecting global cultural flows and the rise of transnational digital identities. This blending opens up fresh spaces for cultural exchange, but it also makes decoding messages and shaping ideological positions more complex for audiences.

Importantly, the comment sections on Shorts reveal that Egyptian viewers aren't just passive consumers. They push back, reinterpret, and personalize the content — turning comments into micro public forums where ideas clash and cultural norms get challenged or reinforced. This supports the view that digital commentary has become a new layer of collective discourse, amplifying both polarization and meaningful dialogue.

Overall, the findings confirm that YouTube Shorts, like much of today's digital media, are reshaping what news means for Egyptian youth. Instead of delivering detailed reporting, Shorts act more like cultural signals — sparking emotion, shaping ideological stances, and building a sense of community. This shift shows how digital media has moved from simply delivering facts to actively mediating identity and cultural expression in a fast-changing society.

Together, these insights highlight how tightly linked digital media, news quality, and identity have become. They also point to the need for more context-specific research to understand how local cultures adapt global digital platforms to their own realities. For researchers and media professionals alike,

this study underlines why it's crucial to pay attention not only to how content is made — but also to how audiences interpret, remix, and repurpose it in their everyday lives.

Discussion

The findings of this study strongly echo — and push further — what current research says about how digital media infrastructures, short video culture, and ideological identity come together, as explored in the literature review.

To start, this study supports what Plantin & Punathambekar (2019) and van Dijck et al. (2018) argue: that platforms like YouTube Shorts have grown into cultural infrastructures in their own right, reshaping public debate by blending entertainment with information. The dominance of politically tinged entertainment in Egyptian Shorts backs up Couldry & Hepp's (2016) idea that media don't just pass on messages — they actively rebuild social and cultural life. In this case, Shorts compress weighty political issues into catchy, shareable clips that travel fast.

In line with Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model, this study shows how Egyptian youth actively make sense of Shorts. Rather than just absorbing messages, they interpret, remix, and debate them — a pattern visible in the heavy use of symbolism, profanity, and layered cultural references. Comments on these videos swing from supportive and informative to biting and ironic, illustrating the “active audience” Hall described and echoing later thinkers like Neville (2019) and Jensen (2018), who highlight digital comments as a new arena for co-creating meaning.

The mixing of local Egyptian Arabic with foreign words also lines up with what the literature says about how digital language breaks down old linguistic borders (Arista et al., 2014; Satchell & Foth, 2008). But this study pushes that idea further: here, language mixing isn't just a trendy style — it's a tactic. It helps reframe how news is judged and how young people perform digital identities, adding depth to Mahloulou's (2014) take on ideological identity online.

Evidence of how algorithms shape which Shorts get seen, shared, or sidelined supports media transformation theory (Hepp, 2008; Krotz, 2017). The viral loops that amplify Shorts match Zulli & Zulli's (2020) idea of a “mock audience” — an audience shaped by the platform as much as by people. The study shows that tech and human practice feed into each other, which fits with the social shaping of technology approach (Fuchs, 2003; Couldry & Hepp, 2016).

Importantly, the study brings out tensions that the literature predicts but doesn't always localize. For example, the finding that serious political content, when stripped of humor or entertainment, often racks up dislikes challenges the idea that digital spaces naturally strengthen democratic debate (Papacharissi, 2004). Instead, this evidence backs up Poster (2001) and Boczkowski & Mitchelstein's (2010) more skeptical view of the gap between journalistic ideals and what online audiences actually want.

The visible echo chambers, filter bubbles, and heated language clashes in the comment sections confirm worries raised by Batorski & Grzywińska (2018) and Buckingham (2013): that algorithms, cultural divides, and shifting identities can deepen polarization instead of broadening dialogue.

Finally, by showing how digital diasporas and cultural ties reshape how news is discussed on Shorts, this study answers calls by scholars like Saparova et al. (2020) and Qureshi et al. (2025) for more research grounded in non-Western contexts. It illustrates how Egypt's digital landscape blends global trends with local debates — revealing a tension between preserving culture and adapting to the pressures of platform algorithms, a tension too often overlooked in research focused on the global North.

In short, this study finds that YouTube Shorts aren't just a compressed version of traditional news — they fundamentally reshape how news is packaged, how audiences react, and how ideological identities are formed. They do this in ways that both confirm and complicate the theories explored in the literature review. Together, these insights show that the power of digital media isn't just technical — it's cultural, symbolic, and deeply tied to language and ideology. As this space keeps changing, these dynamics deserve critical attention from future researchers who want to understand how digital media shapes our societies.

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