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Co-opting small stories on social media: A narrative analysis of the directive of authenticity

Small stories research has recently been extended as a paradigm for critically interrogating the current storytelling boom on social media, which includes the designing-spree of stories as specific features on a range of platforms. This algorithmic engineering of stories that integrates them into the spatial architecture of platform affordances has led to the hugely popular feature of Stories on Snapchat and Instagram (also Facebook and Weibo): sharing through Stories has now overtaken sharing through feeds. In this talk, I will offer a methodology for studying such designed stories, underpinned by a technographic, corpus-assisted narrative analysis that tracks media affordances, including platforms' directives to users for how to tell stories and what stories to tell, discourses about stories as platformed features, and communicative practices. I will specifically focus on the directive of authenticity in the storytellers' self-presentation with data from Influencers' Instagram Stories. I will show how the design of stories and the visual and textual choices in them are conducive to presenting the teller as an 'authentic' person, which in this case, means ordinary and relatable. Based on longitudinal data which include posts during the pandemic, I will also discuss on if and how the directive of authenticity in influencers' Instagram Stories presents any attestable shifts during this period.

(Relevant) References

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