

Mediatizing Egyptian Families: Attitudes towards YouTube Household Vlogs.

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Abstract

Mediatizing the old personal home videos and customizing the modern reality-based television shows, YouTube home vlogging emerged as a successful embodiment of the fading-away frontiers between the private and the public in the new media era. Exploiting the affordability, accessibility, and portability of the video production equipment along with the participatory and interactive nature of the Web 2, several Egyptian spouses have initiated their own household video channels, revealing various aspects of what was previously known as their private life. This study explores the Egyptian users' (viewers') perceptions of this new "home-casting" practice and their attitudes towards the content and its creators through a cultural reception analysis lens. Qualitative Thematic Analysis was employed to detect the salient themes and general valence of the users' comments on a sample of videos from two of the users' comments "Ahemd Hassan & Zeinab" and "Diaries of Hamdy & Wafaa." Most of the viewers showed favorable attitudes towards the content, and tones of comments were mostly supportive and defensive of the creators, indicating an accepting approach to the home-based vlogging phenomenon. Comments featured both negative and positive themes but lacked the potential for creating a productive social debate.

Introduction

Preserving the privacy of the family has been a deeply rooted social and cultural asset in the Egyptian society to the extent that any violation of the family boundary would have been regarded as a resentful assault on one of the basic social norms and religious teachings. However, it seems that the new technological advancements in the past two decades have changed the way we see and present ourselves, especially as the distinct frontiers between private and public lives have been challenged and got more blurred.

When giant companies in the television production industry such as Sony and JVC released relatively small camcorders during the 1980s, home video making appeared as a new form of amateur video production. Accordingly, people used to videotape significant family memories and occasions like the birth of a new child, birthdays, holidays, and funny gatherings. (Buckingham, et. al. 2011)

Nevertheless, the classic type of home movies remained in the private space of the family and was restricted to the family members, relatives, and maybe friends. The first instance that personal home-made videos found their way to the publicity was in 1989 through "**America's funniest home videos**" by ABC.

Upon the advent of the new millennium, the lives of ordinary people and households were featured on the screen through the new-then successfully emerging genre of "Reality Shows". In one of its main sub-genres, this type of TV programming has been exposing the personal interactions between family members on air, a move that emphasized the blurriness of borders between private and public spaces. (Skeggs & Wood, 2012)

Nowadays, the opportunities for ordinary internet users to create, publish, and share their own content have opened new horizons for people to disclose their life details and share them with others. According to (Smith, 2012), the mobility, user-friendliness, and affordability of the new communication technologies have lured some families into recording their homes, interactions, and relations and making them available online, mostly on video-hosting networks such as YouTube, motivated by a range of needs that comprise self-presentation, money-making, and social presence.

This new online practice of home-movie making poses a threat to the authentic cultural and social standards of the Arab and Egyptian societies by robbing the families of their socially- and religiously-valued right for integrity, privacy, and interiority.

YouTube-based accounts of Egyptian spouses such as;"Ahmed & Zeinab" and "Hamdy & Wafaa" have been gaining millions of followers and receiving thousands of comments and likes on their posted home vlogs, in which they

reveal different aspects of their life at home, relations with their extended family, and interactions with their children. These home-revolving channels have both a base of loving fans and some angry opponents, who proclaimed their content as defiant to the Egyptian social, cultural, and religious values.

In an attempt to enlarge the basement of their followers and viewers, their videos always featured a call on viewers to subscribe to their channels and post likes and comments, in order to maximize the profit they gained from the YouTube administration. Through posting emotional, funny, playful, and sometimes sensational home videos, they have managed to attract millions of the video-sharing network users, who virtually interact with them on a nearly daily basis. Many of their followers are children, teens, and young adults who are surprisingly introduced to a new way of life, unlike the one they were raised up to.

The significance of viewer-creator interaction is that the followers may develop a pattern of a Para-social relationship with the content owner in form of a pseudo friendship. This quasi-relationship may lead to identification with the videotaped characters, which in turn, especially in early ages, can be an indicator of embracing the values and imitating the acts of the content creator. (Shrum, 2011)

This new type of DIY "Do-it-yourself" Media needs to be scrutinized through the lens of a socio-cultural approach, which will aid to draw a broader picture of the new practice and its reception strategies among users (audiences) in our conservativesocieties.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore if these amateur home videos have managed to create social acceptance among Egyptian YouTube viewers through the investigation of the comments associated with the sample videos. The cultural approach of "Reception Analysis" will be adopted in the classification, analysis process, and discussion of the collected data to detect the users' perceptions of the videos' content and their attitudes towards the videos' creators.

Literature Review

Very little has been done neither to investigate the reactions (comments) of YouTube viewers to the online-posted home movies nor to analyze the values and meanings embedded in them. Therefore, the literature review will highlight a range of significant theoretical, philosophical, and analytical concepts. Namely, this part intends to yield a solid underpinning to this study's focus by reviewing previous writings in three main domains: reception analysis theory and its adaptation to the post-broadcast era, YouTube comments analysis, and online home vlogging.

Reception Analysis Theory

The traditional content analysis focuses mainly on how the meaning is explicitly presented to the audience, assuming that the meaning, delivered within the content, is a “common ground” between the producer and the receiver of the content itself. (Kepplinger, 1989)

In a similar context, (Livingstone, 1989) argued that content analysis gives the researchers the authority to identify, code, interpret the manifest meanings of media content regardless of how the audience members understand and process those meanings. That is why she suggested a subsequent audience reception investigation to complement the findings of the content study.

This view coincides with the phenomenological perspective that adopts the medium-audience formula in the process of mean-making, where the question is not “what” something like a photograph or painting means, but “how” it means. (Jensen, 1993)

That notion was the springboard for the “reception studies” or “audience reception analysis” which saw its evolution and development as a theoretical and analytical approach during the 1980s. (Livingstone, 1998)

Reception theorists emphasize the interaction that occurs between the media texts (all forms of mediated content) and the audience members, currently the media users. They consider this type of media-user engagement as the area of ‘meaning reproduction’. Accordingly, the meanings are neither fixed nor isolated; instead, they are developed throughout the ‘reading/viewing’ experience and the users’ ‘response’ to the media text. (Barry, 2004)

Reception analysis approach focuses on the media audience’s response to and interaction with the media texts to reach an understanding of how media users make sense of media content and how their responses take part in the construction of their perceived reality. (Kor Sins, 2018)

Reception scholars regard the viewers as meaning-makers in the process of visual communication and argue that the picture-viewer formula is the site where the picture meaning is developed. (Jensen, 1993)

This active role of audiences, particularly viewers, not only implies an interpretative but also a constructive interaction with the content, in a way that makes the media users contribute to the production/reproduction of meaning, culture, and reality as well. (Livingstone, 1998)

In a similar sense, the relationship between audience and media texts is seen within a broadly ethnographic scope, where the socio-cultural context of media production/consumption plays an effective role in determining the meanings within the content and in positioning the audience on a spectrum of accepting, negotiating, or rejecting the text. (Morley, 1992)

Therefore, the reception process is contextualized within a given social,

economic, and cultural circumstances. And this cultural map, in turn, determines to some extent the audience's position toward the received content.

This notion is emphasized in Hall's model of encoding/decoding, which solidified the ground for the introduction of 'audience reception research' from the cultural studies perspective.

(Hall, 1994) argued that the dynamic interaction between the producer/encoder and receiver/decoder in a given cultural context is the core for the mean-making process, especially in the televised discourses. He further identified three reception (mean-making) strategies that media audiences may follow in certain circumstances; the dominant-hegemonic position, the negotiated position, and the oppositional position.

These three anticipated types of reception underline the possible reactions/responses of the audiences to the viewed texts, where the first position comes in line with the values, opinions, and cultural practices presented in the original content, the second is about rethinking and refuting the content offerings, and the last represents a counter-view that discovers the subtle meanings embedded in the content and consequently rejects them. (Hall, 1994)

The late 1970s witnessed the earliest recorded case of defiant views against televisual content when the viewers of Star Trek created zines to manipulate the show plotline. While the traditional ways of content defiance were separate from the medium itself like on-ground fan campaigns and communities, the modern-day oppositional reactions have used the internet to run anti-content endeavors. (Martin, 2004). However, the latest method of media users' opposition is embedded in the medium itself, where the viewer, in this study's case, is exposed to the posted videos and then react or debate or even campaign for/against their content simultaneously and on the same platform.

Despite the outstanding instances of content-defiance during the 1980s and 1990s, empirical research thwarted the radical hopes of some scholars regarding the oppositional potentials of the audiences, by revealing relatively negotiation-based reflexive manners rather than total rejection-based positions among media users in their viewing experiences. (Livingstone & Das, 2013)

Positions taken by the media users represent an originally cultural practice as their response strategies are identified by socio-cultural factors such as ethnicity, gender, social class, adopted values, beliefs, and norms, etc. (Morley, 1992)

Through the contextualized lens of the reception analysis approach, media users may have the ability to interpret the text to reproduce meaning and also respond to it by taking a certain discursive position within a broader circuit of culture. (Livingstone & Das, 2013)

Given that meanings are produced in people's minds and people vary in

perceiving the same media content - with the possibility of resisting the text or even splitting in groups; the content-audiences nexus becomes the site of meaning-making and culture reproduction, since the response to others' behaviors generate oneself values and behaviors.(Ahuvia, A. 2001)

That's why questions on the challenges for the cultural identity during the reception process are raised in several studies, which focused on the audience's interpretive positions to the content genre such as soap opera (Brown, 1994), Mexican telenovelas (Moran, 2000), women-oriented programming (Kearney, 2011), and reality shows (Skeggs & Wood, 2012).

Reception Analysis in the New Media Era

New internet-based communicative outlets take the notion of the "active audience" to farther horizons through the user engagement possibilities they offer.

Interactive venues of new social networks have enabled the ordinary users, traditionally passive receivers, to interact with / contribute to the content they consume. Interactivity is the most prominent added-value to cyberspace, allowing users to express their feedback and even to modify the content and add to its original meaning. (Lister, 2010)

The participatory features of Web.2, particularly the social media platforms, have established cyberspace as an arena of meaning production, circulation, and even opposition. The interchangeable roles of online content producers/ consumers paved the way for a new discursive practice of meaning struggles, creating what (Mathieu, 2015) called the "war of audiences".

These notable transformations in the media landscape have led researchers and scholars to revisit the traditional approaches and methods of studying media and their audiences. Reception analysis was among the research branches that needed to be adapted to the radically new changes in the media environment.

Accordingly, the reception theorists started in the early 2000s to identify the insights that the reception analysis approach could offer in studying the media in its new era. (Livingstone & Das, 2013)

Among the prominent efforts in that realm were the studies conducted by Sonia Livingstone in 2004, 2008, and 2013, in which she argues that the reception studies cannot be regarded as an obsolete approach in the new media environment. Moreover, she examined the concepts and assumptions that can be imported from the age of mass communication to study the new characteristics of the Internet age. (Livingstone, 2004)

In a similar sense, she proved the relevance and validity of reception analysis as a cultural approach to study the audiences' engagement with

the contemporary media in semiotic manners that define their strategy of response to the new technological texts. (Livingstone & Das, 2013)

Likewise, (Mathieu, 2015) insisted that the reception analysis must remain a central concept in media studies during the nowadays era of social networking sites. He warned against the absence of the interpretative role of audiences in recent investigations of social media, despite their unprecedented opportunities for user-engagement, interaction, and participation.

According to (Schroder, 2018), reception researchers were pioneers of audience studies that exploited the fact that users' interactions are automatically maintained in the platforms of new media.

Each social network offers an opportunity for its users to share and campaign for their reactions and responses to its user-generated content in an open and public forum. Here comes the role of the social media data to offer insights not only into the users' positions but also on how these reactions constitute some sort of broader social debates. (Procter, et. al. 2015)

In his study about the role of social media during the Quebec student crisis in 2012, Mathieu asserted the relevance of reception analysis as a theoretical and methodological approach to study the user-text-context relations. His study found that social media were utilized as a "symbolic environment", in which social and political meanings were generated and circulated. (Mathieu, 2015)

After investigating a sample of analytical studies, (Schroder, 2018) proved that the reception research concepts and applications still have potential in the post-broadcasting era. He emphasized the "indispensable" contribution of the reception cultural analysis in studying the users' everyday life engagement with social networks, arguing that analyzing data about digital media use would be devalued if not enriched by a culturally contextualized approach.

According to several researchers (Das & Ytre-Arne, 2017), (Kleut, 2017), (Brants & Praag, 2017), and (Schroder, 2018), the user-engagement is a core concept and subject of study in the modern reception analysis given the notion of the active, empowered, and participant media audiences.

In a related context, the reception theorists have challenged Rosen's (Rosen, 2006) widely-cited quotation of "**the people formerly known as the audience**" by suggesting a new definition of the audiences, describing them as "social actors" who are engaging and negotiating with the content and its meanings. (Schroder, 2018)

The CEDAR network's final report - the Consortium on Emerging Directions in Audience Research, asserted the urgency of conducting reception-based studies that seek to provide an understanding of new digital media audiences as "participating agents" in the process of meaning-construction through

content viewing, interpreting, and developing. (Das & Ytre-Arne, 2018)

Furthermore, (Schroder, 2017) put forward that the new media studies, dubbed as “mediatization” research, lack the focus on what he called the “audiencization,” that is to include the role of media audiences in studies that seek to understand the new media cultural practices.

Moving on the same track, (Brants & Praag, 2017) warned that “mediatization” studies had turned their back on the importance of the new media audiences’ empowered public force in making sense of the modern technological texts.

One significant tool in the hands of the new media users to exercise their engaging power is to post comments and generate online debates, which in turn represent their active role in the production of new popular cultural practices. (Kleut, et. al., 2017)

YouTube Comments Analysis

Cyberspace is abundant with participatory arenas that showcase the internet users’ positions regarding what they consume either in traditional or new media. Among these examples, the commenting section, featured in almost all social media networks, stands out. (Wu & Bergman, 2019)

Given the significant role of social networking sites as information sources for studying the users’ perceptions and behaviors, (Livingstone & Das, 2013) highlighted the importance of YouTube in investigating people’s social interactions by analyzing their posted comments.

Furthermore, (Jackson, 2013) hailed the inter-user relations developed through the YouTube production-consumption experience as a pivotal agent in changing the way we understand how culture is constructed, circulated, and evaluated.

According to the symbolic Interactionism theory proposed by (Blumer, 1986), the meaning formation process lies in the interactions between individuals, and this social engagement, in turn, creates the society itself. This notion served as a basement of what (Low, 2008) argued about the potential of the embedded interactions in users’ comments for indicating their behavior in reaction to the ideas and values conveyed by the online posted videos.

In this sense, comments open the cyberspace for discussions, debates, and deliberation concerning the content of their associated videos. These cognitively reciprocal activities render an opportunity for the co-construction of general knowledge and the establishment of shared cultural perceptions. (Dubovi & Tabak, 2020)

This means that the YouTube comments section is regarded as an arena of social and cultural meanings sense-making within the text-user-context nexus. Hence, through the analysis of these user interactions with the text,

we can get interpretative insights into the whole interactive receptive process.

That is why we can consider the YouTube users' comments as raw data for the reception analysis research by extracting audiences' practices of meaning-making and their responsive positions towards the content of the shared videos.

This assumption is underscored by (Ahuvia, 2001), who proposed a new type of data analysis relying on the audiences' interpretations of the media texts. He called his suggested analytical approach, the "reception-based content analysis," which allows researchers to investigate how different media users respond to the media content.

Since the YouTube users are invited to express their viewpoints and feedback regarding the shared videos, their comments can be seen as more credible indicators of their receptive position than their answers in relatively structured research settings. This is what (Procter, et.al. 2015) called the "naturally occurring data" in their analytical study of social media data (user's feedback and comments) for an audience research purpose.

The potential of users' comments as wealthy material for reception analysis was also underlined by (Wang, et. al. 2014), who argued that social media data can reflect users' prominent attitudes as well as positive and negative positions that are not honestly gained in traditional techniques of data collection.

A considerable body of research has utilized the users' comments on YouTube-based videos to generate knowledge about viewers' responses, opinions, attitudes, and counter-views regarding the posted videos. (Jelodar, et. al. 2020) applied an automated sentiment analysis technique on YouTube comments associated with Oscar-nominated movie trailers to explore users' opinions and attitudes towards the content in terms of some social issues like racism.

In another work, (Zhang, 2016) examined the YouTube users' comments on relevant videos to extract attitudes of the public opinion regarding the perceived health hazards of genetically-modified food. Likewise, (Zahir, et. al. 2020) assessed the attitudes towards violence against women and women's rights by classifying the level of polarity in YouTube videos and analyzing the comments associated with them.

Other relevant projects include the work of (Alsous, 2016), who qualitatively analyzed the YouTube comments attached with two commercial videos, which featured interracial families, to identify the most common themes and explore the valence of users' positions towards interracial marriage.

In the same vein, (Dubovi & Tabak, 2020) demonstrated the potential of inter-user interactions to create scientific deliberation and, consequently, a co-construction of knowledge through analyzing 1000 comments from leading

science YouTube channels.

Similarly, (Tyali & Mukhudwana, 2020) conducted a social media reception analysis of the opposing political campaigning during the South African national elections in 2014, revealing that the YouTube comments served as an “uncensored” public arena within which subjects such as country governance were emerged and debated.

Previous examples suggested that YouTube comments could act as an informal space for discussions, deliberations, and interactions, which collectively may contribute to the users’ sense-making of social reality, reproduction of culture, and construction of shared knowledge.

Reviewing an extensive body of research, (Zahir, 2020) points out that relevant literature tells us about many methods of comment analysis, which takes various labels such as opinion analysis, opinion mining, and sentiment analysis. All these techniques can be classified under two main groups; machine-based procedure and lexicon-based approach. Both methods rely on counting certain loaded words and phrases that serve as indicators of users’ opinions, attitudes, and emotions.

This conclusion underlines the significance of comment analysis in extracting users’ patterns of reaction and response to the published content. However, the used methods still belong to the quantitative style in data collection and categorization.

In contrast, the current study takes a broader interpretive perspective in both data classification and analysis; every single comment within the sample was carefully investigated for the user’s perceptions and attitudes to be accurately identified.

YouTube Home Vlogs

Traditionally, the domestic video recordings were particularly made for memorizing significant events or documenting emotional reactions within the family frontier. They were restricted in terms of viewing to the family members, relatives, or friends. They remained within the private and protected family space.

Home movies during the 20th century constituted a form of UGC (user-generated content) since they were created by non-professional amateurs outside the television production facilities. In the early 2000s, the free video-sharing website “YouTube” has been born to transform the private nature of these home-made videos. (Kim, 2010)

The very first video to be published on YouTube, “Me in the Zoo”, highlighted the personalized nature of the network. It also alluded, as (Kim, 2010) noted, to the future use of the video-sharing website as a platform for a new kind of

personal diaries, which are visually-based (Vlogs). Accordingly, Kim positioned the network as a new “personalized” medium that combines the possibilities of broadcasting and narrowcasting, amateurism and professionalism, the public, and the private.

Nowadays, the once-traditional boundaries between media production, distribution, and consumption are technically negotiated, especially after the new “prosumer” technologies, which enable the ordinary media audiences to become creators, producers, and publishers of media materials, have become accessible to almost everyone of internet users. (Lister, 2010)

According to (Capitiano, 2012), the private/public dichotomy has been challenged with people rushing to disclose their life moments online through sharing personal pictures and videos on different social media platforms. That raises concerns over protecting the privacy of the family members, especially children.

Consequently, the notion of the online “public sphere”, hailed by scholars after the introduction of the interactively “democratic” and “pluralist” Web.1 in the late 20th century, might be under scrutiny with users nowadays circulating and sharing their private life events and issues rather than discussing and reflecting on public affairs and social problems.(Capitiano, 2012)

The blurring boundaries between the personal and the public are manifested in the activities of vloggers who risk the privacy and integrity of their own lives by exposing themselves and their families to the complex environment of YouTube. (Werner, 2012)

The idea of exposing the domestic life, interactions, and relationships of ordinary people on the screen is not the child of the YouTube era, as it finds its roots in the inception of reality shows on television in the early 2000s. That may lead us to label the household Vlogs as a new wave of reality TV.

According to (Tambunan, 2020) the popularity of reality television shows, particularly programs that reveal the real lives of the families such as The Real Housewives franchise demonstrated the people’s appetite for viewing the domestic and personal details of other families.

Despite the several social, cultural, and moral concerns being raised recently, the housewives vloggers have made use of the accessibility and mobility of modern video production equipment along with the Web. 2 content publishing and circulation affordances to satisfy their desire for self-presentation and fulfill the people’s tendency to see the domestic interactions on screen. (Jackson, 2013)

Online home videos are not just made for entertainment by showing scenes from the everyday life interactions between family members; mother-children or wife-husband relationships; they are profit-oriented since YouTube offers

financial support for the video creators who gained viewership and popularity.

In the same context, creators of popular videos are privileged to have advertisements on their channels and win a percentage of the Ads revenue. The modern celebrities of YouTube can make a living off the profits that their videos gained. (Sato, 2012)

Unlike the classic home videos, the new form of online home vlogs do not neutrally archive or document the significant family events and moments; instead, they represent intentionally selected, or even fabricated, scenes of life. The home vloggers chose what to record and determine how to structure and present their recordings, driven by the strive for building up a broader base of viewers. (Jackson, 2013)

In this way, it seems that the new home vlogs have got rid of traditional home videos' privacy and also abandoned their spontaneity and credibility. Hence, we could say that the YouTube home vlogs have "mediatized" an old form of personal home-based videos, creating a new video production practice that combines the private nature of classic home movies and the mass sense of reality television.

The new home video makers indeed remediated (imitated) the concept and application of reality shows, yet they went further by maintaining a direct interaction with their followers on the online network. They managed to "customize" the reality television idea to reinvent an interactive form that best fulfills their goals.

Between the classic home videos and the modern reality-based TV, the YouTube home vlogs stand as a "home-casting" practice that is profit-oriented by capturing carefully selected domestic moments that could appeal to their current and anticipated audiences. In this context, (Tambunan, 2020) noted that family vloggers don't portray their lives in a structured style as reality TV shows. By claiming that they document their real-life at home, they present random and incidental scenes of their everyday routines.

Emphasizing the money-making side of YouTube vlogging, (Sato, 2012) asserted the selection process performed by the home vloggers to satisfy their followers' likes, which means more subscribers, viewers, admirers, and consequently profits.

Through a cultural lens, the home vlog - as a reality-based media text-delivers value-laden messages to its viewers by presenting certain cultural, moral, and social practices. (Skeggs & Wood, 2012)

In this way, the online home video viewing experience can be regarded as a productive discursive space, where particular meanings are embedded within the video discourse then interpreted by the viewers in a specific context. The final outcome is the construction of shared cultural and social reality within

the “text-user-context” nexus.

Following this notion, (Jackson, 2013) argued that YouTube home videos could have the ability to construct meanings, shape identities, and feed cultural practices over time.

The potential social and cultural impact of the new home vlogging practice could be maximized by the high levels of interactivity and engagement with the viewers that the video-sharing network offers. (Sato, 2012)

Collectively, (Tolson, 2010), (Sato, 2012), and (Jackson, 2013) have asserted the “conversational tone” of the YouTube-based vlogs. They resemble the vlogs viewing experience with face-to-face communication, in which instant feedback is guaranteed. This interactive feature results in more user engagement and identification with YouTube personalities than traditional television stars.

Egyptian Households on YouTube

The internet-based website-ranking platform “Alexa” showed that YouTube is the second most used network in Egypt, following Google, with an estimated daily time of approximately 17 minutes and an estimated daily page view of 9 per each user. In light of these data, YouTube outperforms other social networks in Egypt, such as Facebook and Instagram. (Alexa, Nov. 2020)

Research studies that examine the content of Egyptian household videos or explore online practices of home videos’ creators have not explicitly been found. That is why the current section is heavily based on a preliminary qualitative investigation of the researcher himself to set the ground for the analytical procedures of the viewers’ sample comments.

Some housewives have made use of the extensive and easy use of the network, along with the availability of video shooting and editing applications to stage their own channels. Unlike the well-organized and relatively systematic visual content of the YouTube influencers in fields of fashion, cosmetics, and cooking, the new wave of household videos is randomly produced, including messy shots and illogical editing, with a focus on activating the curiosity of anticipated viewers.

Seeking to make money out of YouTube, several ordinary housewives launched their own channels based mainly on showing the daily household routines. These home-routine-based pages tend to simply show the YouTuber wife doing her normal and regular chores. Dressed up in modest and comfortable home clothing, positioning the camera in one corner of the room, and recording a vocal description of what is going on, the vlog is ready to be published in public. They also do not forget to post catchy titles, which in most of the time, include cheesy words and sensational phrases.



“Routine of a wife who bears the household responsibility alone, who never fail and know well what’s meant by marriage and family.”

To maximize their profits by attracting more audiences, many of the routine channels’ creators started to expose more family members; kids, husbands, siblings, old parents, and also friends. It seems that they are trying to present a more variety of inter-family relations and interactions to enlarge their viewership and maintain the current fellowship. In this sense, videos featuring family visits, hangouts with friends, domestic parties and celebrations, and family holidays are noticeably visible in these channels.



“The first debut. Finally, I convinced him to appear, just for you. He is my whole love.”

In the same vein, videos with excessive and ridiculous humor are also found in the home-based pages on YouTube. Videos of playing tricks, pranks, hilarious contests, silly challenges, and unreasonable purchases are examples of this visual category. Down below are some examples:



"A prank played on my wife while sleeping. You will die of laughter."



"I bought a lion for my wife. He will live at home with us."



Friends challenge

In the above left-side picture, three friends challenged each other to eat a massive amount of pasta and fried chicken. The loser was punished on the rooftop by rinsing her in water, as shown on the right-side screenshot.

The online home video makers do not neglect the effectiveness that drama might have in influencing their audiences, that's why we frequently encounter videos that show in-family quarrels or in-house fabricated plots.



خناقتمع زوجتي و انتيت بطلاق .
(انفصلا)

996K views • 1 month ago



حطت ل حمايتها سم في الدواء (الدين
□ المعامله) واول ظهور ل وجه جديد

2M views • 5 months ago

Examples of fake dramatic plots

The above two screenshots are showing examples of fake dramatic plots published on home-based channels; the first about a wife who just poisoned her mother-in-law, and the second portrays a wife-husband fight that ended up with divorce.

Despite the negative sides of the recently erupted household vlogging phenomenon, the vlogging housewives continue to gain more and more visibility and fellowship, even in the traditional media. Several female YouTubers have made their way to the television screen to host their own cooking shows. Examples include; Marwa El-Shafeay (al-Nahar channel), Fatma Abu Hati (Panorama Food channel), and Sodfa Gad (TEN channel).

It is worth noting that not only the housewives are the leaders in this type of online home vlogging; also, there are examples of husbands who took the initiative to expose their families online. During the last few years, several examples of spouses have managed to present their families in a way that made them YouTube stars. Examples comprise channels such as; 'AZ Family' (Ahmed Hassan & Zeinab) with 6.29M subscribers, 'Diaries of Hamdy & Wafaa' with 2.2M subscribers, 'Geba Masr & Om Selim' with 1.86M subscribers, and 'Abdel Rahman Mabrouk' with 1.52M subscribers.

Aged two years old on average, these family-disclosing channels have succeeded in building up a broad base of viewers and followers and triggered criticism by other YouTubers, who found their content to be trivial, socially harmful, or counter-cultural.

Among many relevant concerns, the practice of child abuse within the content of home-based videos should be legally investigated. Children in home channels are useful material for creating in-video emotions, excitement, and attractiveness. Parent vloggers use their kids as tools for promoting their videos. This practice may contain various forms of abuse exercised against

resourceless youngsters. Children's privacy is violated on several levels since they are robbed of their right to choose if they would like to appear on the screen. They also may be used as a making-laugh instrument or a subject of sarcasm in videos. Indeed, these intrusive acts may harm the children's mental and psychological well-being and distort the way they see and perceive their social reality.



Home YouTube vlogging

By browsing the video-sharing network, it is obvious that the practice of home YouTube vlogging in Egypt has expanded with new themes being invented very frequently by the family 'home-casters', whom relatives have exploited their online success to launch channels of their own, explicitly, to share their good moments, and, implicitly, to share the revenues with them.

Suffice to say that online home vlogging is a new-media-induced phenomenon that contradicts with Egyptian inherited social norms and entrenched cultural values. It also represents a new individual activity that may have anti-social effects on families, children, and society's authenticity. Therefore, the different aspects of this cultural practice should be examined through research efforts conducted to explore its performers' motivations, analyze the values embedded in the content, and examine its level of social penetration.

The current study approaches the phenomenon from an audience perspective, attempting to examining its acceptability among Egyptian viewers of two Egyptian family-run YouTube channels by exploring the viewers' general attitudes and tones of responses towards the home-disclosing content and its creators.

Research Questions

1. What are the tones of viewers' responses to the studied household vlogs? (Defensive- Supportive - Neutral – Sarcastic - Critical - Offensive)
2. What are the most frequent/salient themes in the comments (Positive & Negative)?

3. What is the general valence of responses (attitudes) of viewers towards the content and creators of the studied home vlogs?

(Favorable-Reflexive-Oppositional)

4. To what extent, do the comments initiate socially productive debates among users?

5. To what extent, do the comments represent an engaging relation with the video creators?

Methodology

The concepts and procedures of the cultural approach of “reception analysis” are adopted as a theoretical and methodological underpinning of this study.

Traditionally, the reception studies defied the prevalent quantitative methods of data collection and analysis by relying mostly on qualitative techniques to provide in-depths cultural and social insights into the audience relations to the media texts. (Kim, 2010)

Accordingly, the thematic analysis approach is employed in the coding and interpretation of data. The thematic analysis is a qualitative technique for analyzing data among other interpretive methods like discourse analysis and narrative analysis.

Unlike the traditional quantitative analysis, which seeks to count certain words or phrases to discover manifest and latent meanings, the thematic method’s main emphasis is on the process of meaning construction within the texts to find out the patterns of themes, perceptions, and emotions. (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

That is why the thematic analysis is best suited for the current study’s purpose and theoretical framework. In this sense, the viewers’ perception and attitudes towards the home vlogs on YouTube would be extracted from their interactions with the posted videos.

The viewers’ comments would serve - sometimes as a direct indicator, and other times as a subtle manifestation of how they receive, interpret, and respond to the embedded messages in the published video content. (Kor Sins, 2018)

For the sake of achieving the study objective, the researcher selected two of the most viewed YouTube Egyptian family channels; (Ahmed Hassan & Zeinab) and (Diaries of Hamdy & Wafaa).

The sample videos whose comments will be analyzed were determined based on two consecutive criteria; video popularity and video relevance. YouTube popularity-based filter was chosen in classifying the videos of the two channels. Among those with the highest viewership rate, the **five** most relevant videos were selected for each channel. Videos that document the family life in a home-movie-like manner were deemed more relevant. Another criterion was also considered in selecting the videos, which is the variety of video content in order to detect – out of the comments - as many themes and attitudes as possible.

Employing these three filters allowed the researcher to draw a broader and more comprehensive picture of the viewers' reception positions.

The last step of the sampling process was the determination of comments to be examined. The very first 100 top comments received by the prespecified videos were coded and analyzed. That brings the total number of sample comments to 1000 during the study. The reason behind choosing the most popular comments is to gain more insights into the themes, which are suggested in the viewers' comments and replies. These top comments are more likely to generate debates and discussions about the shared videos.

The irrelevant comments, such as promotion for other channels, seeking for financial help, and prayers, have not been considered. Also, comments written in a dialect other than Egyptian Arabic are excluded due to this study's objective, which is to explore the Egyptian users' reception strategies regarding the vlogs of Egyptian families.

The following table shows the stages of determining the sample of this study.

Table (1)
The Study's Sample

Sample	Level of Selection	Reason for Selection	Total
Sample Channels	Two channels Az Family, Hamdy & (Wafaa Diaries)	Popularity	2 Home Vlogs
Sample Videos	Five for each channel	Popularity, Relevance, and Variety	10 Videos
Sample Comments	100 for each video	Popularity and Relevance	1000 Com- ments

The analytical strategy combines the deductive and inductive approaches; the first analysis method relies on a theoretical framework in coding the collected data. In the other technique, the coding categories emerge throughout the data collection and processing.

Hence, the deductive side is employed to explore the valence of responses to the posted video through the lens of the reception analysis model of Stuart Hall. The inductive part is applied to extract the pattern of themes and perceptions embedded in the users' comments.

Furthermore, the qualitative cultural and social insights into the phenomenon under examination are paired with brief numerical proof to solidify the resultant findings and add to their validity.

Results and Discussion

Before starting to collect, code, and investigate the sample comments, it can be noted from the analytics of the two selected home vlogs how popular they are. Both channels have managed to attract millions of followers and viewers as well as thousands of likes and comments.

The following screenshots recorded from the YouTube channelytics section highlight the two channels' output, reach, and range.

 أحمد حسن و زينب - AZ Family 6.27M subscribers	Total LifeTime	Views	Videos
		1.18B	303
 يوميات حمدي ووفاء ✓ 2.19M subscribers	Last 30 Days	Views	Videos
		211M	57
	Total LifeTime	Views	Videos
		443M	431
	Last 30 Days	Views	Videos
		36.2M	12

Successful YouTube vlogging

Given the relatively 'young age' of the two platforms, they can be said to have made a success in the YouTube vlogging space. The above charts also tell us that their popularity is on the rise, considering the number of views in only one month compared to the total count of viewership during the channel lifetime.

A preliminary qualitative examination of the concerned channels' content indicates that not all the videos fall into the category of home vlogs, that is, documentation of everyday life events and moments. They mostly were, as (Tambunan, 2020) holds, previously planned scenes and carefully selected incidents that the creators decided to record and circulate for the sake of grasping more viewership and subscription rates.

Pranks, challenges, and family purchases videos rank high among other posts of the two channels. This remark adds to the cultural imperative of these visual practices that are gained a sense of symbolic power through the growing rates of creator-user interaction on the social network.

Growing numbers of subscribers raised several social, cultural, and psychological concerns due to these home videos' potential powerful impact on the viewers' sets of values and social norms, particularly the younger followers.

The following table features the titles and users' engagement rates of the sample videos, whose comment sections were the framework for choosing the sample comments of the current study.

Table (2)
User Engagement Rates with the Sample Videos

Channel	Video Title	Views	Likes	Dislikes	Comments
AZ Family	“Zeinab is pregnant. We had a party & decided to dance”	6.6M	236K	20K	30K
	“The giving birth vlog from inside the hospital. The debut of our baby girl”	14M	526K	105K	46K
	“Bathing routine of our baby Eline. Super cute”	5.3M	208K	15K	13K
	“A new start. Zeinab wearing Hijab”	3.6M	317K	17K	38K
	“Why our daughter Eline won’t show up again on YouTube”	3.6M	246K	20K	24K
Total	Five Videos	33.1M	1.5M	177K	151K
Diaries of Hamdy & Wafaa	“School’s first day routine. We had a morning line-up”	3.4M	156K	7.7K	9.9K
	“I surprised the family with a fancy trip. How amazing!”	3M	206K	6.4K	10K
	“I surprised my wife with 10 unexpected household gifts. Her excitement is indescribable”	3M	191K	6.2K	14K
	“The historic party and banquet for my bigger family”	2.6M	193K	5.3K	18K
	“I opened my moneybox and spent my life savings; I bought my husband an unexpected present. He was surprisingly shocked”	3.4M	237K	6.5K	13K
Total	Five Videos	15.4M	983K	32.1K	64.9K

It is obvious how popular and viral the two channels are among YouTube Egyptian users, especially when the millions of ‘likes’ their videos got compared to the limited numbers of ‘dislikes’.

The implications of the above figures seem to be confirmed by examining the viewers’ comments, which generally reveal that the efforts of the being studied home video-makers are paying off in terms of content selection and presentation.

Upon a close examination of the viewers' responses that home vloggers get on their posted videos, the following sections provide an in-depth elaboration on the users' reactions and attitudes towards the sample home-based vlogs.

Tones of Responses

Surprisingly, most of the comments' tones were supportive of the video creators, despite what could be thought out from the first sight of the content of videos. Traditionally, the concept of uncovering and showcasing the very interior of homes is not widely welcomed in Egyptian society. However, this new practice of exposing family affairs online is found to win acceptance, at least, among most of the millions of fans of the concerned home vloggers.

Table (3)
Tones of Users' Responses

Tone	Defensive	Supportive	Neutral	Sarcastic	Critical	Offensive	Total
Percentage	3 %	83 %	3.4 %	1.5 %	5.7 %	3.4 %	100 %

As shown in the above table, the majority of viewers' comments contain a sense of support for the content creators. The supportive tone takes various forms ranging from happy wishing and prayers to encouragement and praise. Among examples of these favorable comments are the following:

إلين جميلة ماتشاء الله ربنا يخليكو ي رب

👍 1 🗨️ 📄 ▼ 📄 REPLY

**"Eline is beautiful, touch wood.
God bless her fo you".**

OM-Mouhab 1 month ago

ربنا يبتلك عليه ويهدينا جميعا وكل من قال أمين

👍 8.5K 🗨️ REPLY

View 407 replies

**"May God preserve your Hijab and
guide us all ..."**

والله ونعمه الزوج انت عظيم جدا انا يا ربك الناس كلها تبقي زيك. ربنا يحفظك

👍 198 🗨️ 📄 ▼ 📄 REPLY

**"I swear to God; you're the best example of a husband. I wish all people
would be like you. God bless you."**

فعلًا احلى فيديو بجد والله اسعدونتي وكأني معاكم بالظبط ربنا يا اارك في لمنكوا وجمعنكوا دايمًا!!! ويوسع على الجميع يا ارب

4 2 1 1 1 REPLY

“This is truly the nicest video ever. You made me really happy, as if I am exactly with you. May God bless you all ...”

The last comment reflects multiple reactions since it conveys a sense of connectedness and identification combined with praise of content and encouragement.

A modest percentage of the comments stand as a defense for the video creators and their online activity. This reaction represents an ultra-fan-like behavior to refute any critical remarks of other users. This defensive tone sometimes goes further to embrace an offensive attitude towards users of critical views. The following comment is an example of that offensively defensive tonality.

وفيها اي لما مراته تطلع ح انسجرام ويوتيوب زيه هيا مش بني ادمه زيه ولا هو مطلعها عريانه!! انا بابايا بيطلعني @4g
معاه عادي زي ما بيطلع اخويا احنا الاتنين واحد هو الراجل احسن م الست يعني هو يطلع وهي متطلعتش لي!!!!
انت شكلك فلاح من الي بيعتبرو الست خدامه وملهاش تطلع ولا حد يشوفها او شكلك جاهل

2 2 1 1 1 REPLY

The supporting user here defends the idea of allowing the wife to appear on the screen, claiming that it is a matter of gender equality. Moreover, this viewer insults the commentator as an ‘uncivilized’ and ‘illiterate’ person. This user’s comment, along with similar comments, represents a probable shift in society’s collective mindset since it holds preserving and defending the privacy of households and wives as an indication of backwardness and ignorance in contrast to culturally-inherited norms of protecting the secrecy of homes.

Critical tones were also reported in the sample comments, yet with a far lower percentage than the favorable and encouraging comments. The critical attitude represents the viewers’ dissent to the home videos’ content and the creators’ irresponsible acts.

Several reasons for the unfavorable reactions were detected in the examined comments, including the home privacy violation and the parental abuse against children. The next comment highlights the vloggers’ strive for more online outreach at the expense of their home privacy and consideration of the unprivileged families.

This finding may allude to the lack of productively critical manner among the YouTube users in Egypt, who tend, as shown in this paper, to lavish the creators with pure support or slaughter them with harsh criticism.

Salient Themes

Users' comments are supposed to suggest reasons for their specific tones; for example, the critical comment may include a negative theme that the user put forward as a manifestation of their oppositional response to the content or its creators.

However, it was found that approximately half of the comments were 'plain'; just supporting or criticizing the sample videos or the vloggers themselves without raising a concern or revolving around some particular issue.

The following table shows that theme-loaded comments exceeded the comments that lack specific themes with a marginal percentage ahead. Among the featured themes, 69 % suggested positive issues related to the home videos and their creators. This came in line with the previous finding that revealed mostly supportive tones of the viewers' comments.

Table (4)
Themes in Comments

Comments with Themes		Comments without Themes
53.7%		46.3%
Positive	Negative	
69 %	31 %	

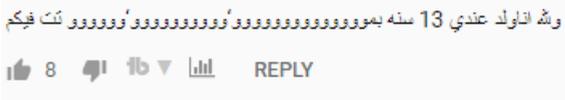
A lot of favorable comments do not bear a specific reason for giving such support to the video creators; there were frequently recurring praise, good wishes, or encouragement. However, the content of the comment itself was 'empty', suggesting pure support. That is why the positive themes percentage (69 %) is not identical to the high rate of supportive and defensive comments, as shown in the 'tones of responses' section.

There have also been some comments that contained more than one theme, issue, or concern. In particular, the negative comments were loaded with multiple themes, resulting in a situation where the relatively high percentage of negative themes (31 %) is not apparently balanced with the limited portion of the critical and offensive comments that appeared in the sample.

Examples for ‘empty’ and ‘plain’ comments include:



“Very Beautiful, touch wood. God Bless her.”



“I’m a 13-year-old boy. Love you so much.”

The table below lists the most salient themes that frequently appeared in the examined comments. Each shown percentage represents the portion that its associated theme accounts for within the entire body of the sample users’ comments.

Table (5)
Salient Positive and Negative Themes in Comments

Themes		Percentage of Total Comments
Positive	Success in Life (Role Models)	14.4 %
	Quality of Content	13.6 %
	Behavior Correction	8.8 %
Negative	Lack of Religiosity	3.7 %
	Irresponsible Parenthood	3.2 %
	Privacy Violation	2.7 %
	Content Superficiality	2.6 %
	Falsehood & Non-credibility	1.8 %
	Profit-seeking	1.6 %
	Child Abuse	1.3 %

Apparently, the positive themes ranked on top of the issues contained in

the studied comments with relatively high rates compared to the negative themes.

The supporting viewers emphasized the success of the video creators in their social and family life, in a way that holds them as role models for the parents in general. The second theme in the list asserts another aspect of success, which refers to the vloggers' effective online existence; many comments praised the efforts exerted by the creators to present good-quality and useful content. Altogether, these findings confirmed the symbolic power that the vloggers assumed on the network and highlights their potential impact on the viewers and followers, who may tend to adopt the values or copy the acts of those they look up to as role models.

The third theme, behavioral correction, refers to a modification in the vloggers' shared behavior in response to previous comments of the viewers or any other online critical reviews. A considerable frequency of comments contained praise for the creators' new adapted behaviors. A prominent example of the current theme is the coming back of Ahmed & Zeinab following a pause in their online activity after they were legally questioned and fined in response to a video in which they intimated their young daughter by wearing scary make-up. Ahmed and Zeinab got back to YouTube with the wife wearing the Islamic veil, Hijab, and the husband claiming that his baby girl would no longer show up in videos. Below, some examples of positive themes in the comments are listed.

soNdos Arabic 1 month ago (edited)
 مين جاي بعد ما يلين كبرت سويه وزينب رجعت التحجب تاني
 239 REPLY

“Who’s in, after Eline grew up a little and Zeinab wore Hijab again?”

بعد ماشاءالله عليكم بجد انا بتعلم منكم كتير بجد... واهم حاجه بتعلمها منكم ازاي افرح عتيالي مهما كانت الظروف... ربنا يرا فضلكم ويسدلكم ويحسن اليكم زي مبيحسنو لبعض
 4 REPLY

“Touch wood, seriously. I learn a lot from you and most importantly, how to please my kids regardless of the circumstances. God Bless”.

اول عائلة من اليوتيوب كله متفوقين على الكل اليوتيوبر بعقوليتهم واصولهم الاصول واحترامهم المتبادل بين بعض... ونعم التربية

12 2 REPLY

“You are the best family ever on YouTube. You outperform the others with your spontaneity, authenticity, and mutual respect”.

On the other side, the opposing comments embraced a variety of negative themes that respectively include; religious concerns over the content, lack of rational and responsible parenthood, violation of the family privacy, trivial content, non-credibility and non-originality, commodification of the family life, and finally abuse against children.

The reported negative themes collectively put forward that the vloggers, striving to make money out of YouTube, have sacrificed crucial aspects and vital necessities of their family and private life. Accordingly, comments argued that the online home video makers present content, which is counter-religion, harmful to family and children, empty and superficial, fake and fabricated, and profit-oriented.

Surprisingly, concerns over probable child abuse in the home vlogs came at the tail of the negative themes list, despite the several child mistreatment instances in the sample videos. This may indicate low levels of awareness regarding how parents should deal with their children and present proof of prevalent misconceptions regarding the children’s rights. Very few responses to child abuse were reported in the sample comments.

اخر همهم بعد السياحة والمسابقات والفرح بكرة بعد الفرح شوف التربية على اولادكم في المدرسة من زملائهم وتكونوا انتم السبب

2 2 REPLY

“They only care about swimming, contests, and amusement. Wait for your children to be bullied at school, and you are the reason for that.”

البيبي اول يوم لها عالديا ويقظها ي ساقله ي منحطة ولا الام قبل العملية بتقول الساقله اللي ف بطني لاحول ولا قوة الا بالله

37 2 REPLY

“The first day the baby is born, her father calls her a pitch and asshole. Moreover, the mother before the operation said; the pitch in my belly. What a pity!”

A considerable amount of the negative comments underscore that in-video

acts and practices stand in contradiction with religious principles such as; preserving households' secrecy, wearing decent cloth, commitment to morning prayers, respecting old parents, family gatherings, and helping the poor. This finding is consistent with the general nature of Egyptian society that tends to be religious. It is also a widely-adopted practice among people to offer religious advice or criticize others based on religion's teachings.

General Attitudes (Valence of Responses)

According to Stuart Hall's media text encoding/decoding model, audiences may follow three reception strategies in the sense-making of media messages. These discursive schemes represent users' adopted positions, responses, and reactions to the media text under investigation. The first reception strategy, in which the viewers are affected by the dominant meaning embedded within the text, results in more favorable feedback. This case is reported here, according to the findings of the current study.

As shown in the coming table, the examination of viewers' sample comments showed that most home vlogs' users react in favor of the videos' content and their creators. In contrast, content-rejecting responses take up only a small percentage.

Table (6)
General Valence of Users' Comments

Attitude	Favorable	Reflexive	Oppositional	Total
Percentage	86 %	3.4 %	10.6 %	100 %

This unexpected result reveals that the new practices of exposing the households online have gained a sense of social acceptance among the Egyptian users of home-based vlogs. In this way, home vloggers have managed to assume a level of symbolic dominance and hegemony, represented in the overall favorability among viewers.

The symbolic power that is found to be attached to online home videos implies that their content is playing a significant part in the process of meaning-making within the text-user-context nexus. According to this study's findings, the users' role of opposing or negotiating values and practices presented in videos is limited.

Unlike claims of the reception theorists, who argued that the audience members would seemingly reject media texts that contradict the social value system and cultural map of society, this study found that viewers received

the counter-cultural content of home vlogs outside of the well-established nexus of text-user-context. It seems that the Egyptian followers of the home-based YouTube channels have not taken the video content seriously; instead, they may tend to be consuming it as a different exciting and amusing online product.

Likewise, reflexive paths of negotiating the media texts meaning were also minimized in the viewers' responses to the sample videos (3.4%). Perhaps, this finding reflects the acute state of opinion and attitude polarization that has been prevalent in Egyptian society during the past few years.

Debate Potential

Scholars suggest that social media data provide a wealth of information regarding people's attitudes and expected behaviors. That makes the comments section a probable space for in-user interactions in the form of discussions and deliberation. It seems that this is not the case in this study's sample; the percentage of comments that have a genuine potential for creating positive and productive debates stands at only 1.5 %, as shown in the following table.

Table (7)
Debate Potential in Comments

Comments with Debates		Comments without Debates
2.5 %		
Positive	Negative	97.5 %
1.5 %	1 %	

The positive debate here means that the users are engaging in healthy discussions, exchanging thoughts, and reflecting on video-related ideas. In comparison, the negative debate refers to acts that disrupt the smooth interaction process, such as aggressive words, accusations, insulting, or mocking.

Overall, the sample comments lacked this potential of debating, both positive and negative, since a reported 97.5 % of the users' responses did not generate any sense for discussion. Even the most popular comments that gained hundreds of replies and likes did not receive developmental responses. Replies were merely a repetitive confirmation to the original comment in most cases, in a way that makes the comment threads look like a loop of

similar remarks; “God bless you,” “We love you so much,” “I adore you,” “God bless you all,” and so on.

Very few comments were having the real opportunity for initiating a debate; those comments have to be of a favorable or at least a neutral tone. Otherwise, the vloggers’ fans would stage a war of negative replies to the original comment. One example of the unhealthy debates is triggered by the critical comment below.



“If you are sincere in getting back to Hijab, remove videos in which you appear without it or while you are in a swimming pool and any similar videos. Would you, or the YouTube dough does not allow you to?”

On the contrary, comments with neutral tones like the following were found to have generated a healthy discussion among users.



“Waffa, I have a request. Give the old stuff to people in need. For those who agree, press like to make the comment visible.”

Engagement and Identification

As shown below, the portion of comments that comprises users’ acts of engagement does not exceed 20 % of the sample. This finding may indicate lower attachment levels to the video creators themselves despite the high rates of viewership.

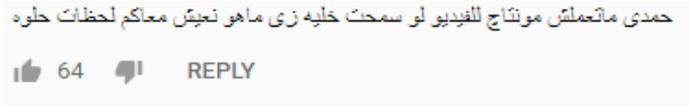
Table (8)
Users’ Engagement tone in Comments

Comments with Engagement Tone	Comments without Engagement Tone
19.1 %	80.9 %

Engagement here does not refer to the generally known acts of social media users’ interaction with network-based content such as likes, shares, and

comments; the types of interaction (Kleut, 2017) labeled the small acts of engagement.

However, the viewer's engagement in this study takes a higher level of networking inter-user connection, which comes in the form of a simulated personal relation between the video creators and their followers. This type of interconnectedness could be seen as a Para-social relation, which is manifested in the intimate conversational tone of comments, addressing the vloggers as if they are friends or relatives of the user.

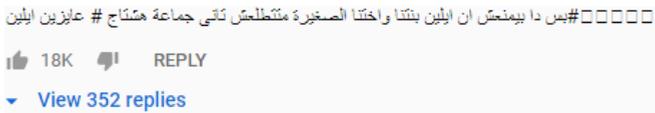


“Hamdy, please do not edit the video; keep it in its original form to live with you the happy moments.”

The vloggers usually invite viewers to engage with the video content, for example, to vote on funny contests or subscribe to the channel and like the video. One of the viewers put it: “Congratulations, my darling. Zeinab’s dancing is the best, and Ahmed’s good too.” This was a vote-like comment on a video featuring a small party celebrating Zeinab’s pregnancy. Ahmed asked the viewers to write in the comments who danced the best; Ahmed and Zeinab or Ahmed’s brother and his wife.

Another aspect of the current paper’s engagement concept is the users’ sense of responsibility towards the YouTubers, a feeling that drives followers, for instance, to direct pieces of advice or to initiate promotional efforts to further enlarge the fan base. One of the examined comments highlighted the engaging tone in the form of advice. The comment says: “Hamdy, you are not supposed to enter the house wearing the shoes, as they must be fully polluted and unclean.”

The highest level of engagement, according to the consumer behavior studies, is “advocacy,” which also appear in comments like the one below.



“What you have said doesn’t mean that our daughter and little sister should not appear again. People, here’s a hashtag # we want Eline back.”

Here, the follower creates a hashtag, calling on other users to press the

vloggers to let their young daughter back on the YouTube screen again. The comment gained thousands of likes and hundreds of replies. Several similar comments were reported in the sample.

Moreover, a sense of attachment and identification with the home video-makers was detected in several comments, particularly the younger fans, who address the vloggers as “uncle” and “aunt”. Comments like the following ones were featured in the sample:



Examples of a sense of attachment and identification with the home video-makers

The left-side comment says: “Uncle Hamdy, we love your videos because they are interesting and funny. Make them longer.” The second puts it: “I swear the video beginning is fantastic. I love you so much, aunt Wafaa. The whole video is very nice, I swear.” It is apparent how those young viewers use the personal pronouns addressing the vloggers intimately in a way that reveals a sense of attachment that could maximize the impact of the values embedded in the videos on the social construction of reality and future cultural practices of the youngsters.

It could be claimed that those young followers have identified, to some extent, with the video creators, whom they may consider as role models of parents. This finding sounds alarming from a cultural perspective because it emphasizes the dominant power of this media text on teens and children, who are more vulnerable to media effects than rational adults.

By repeated exposure to this type of home videography, children may behold the virtual family as the ideal model of a happy family. They might be taught that it is okay and cool to uncover home’s domestic details and disclose each tiny part of their private life to strangers.

Conclusion

In an attempt to explore whether the new practice of online home movies has gained social and cultural acceptance in Egyptian society, this study applied the principles of the reception-based analysis in investigating the viewers’ comments on Egyptian household vlogs. Surprisingly, results found a generally favorable attitude among YouTube users towards the content and creators of two of the most popular home-based channels. Also, the sample comments reflected a dominant supportive tone for the home vloggers, while critical tones were found to be limited.

As per the most salient themes in both favorable and oppositional comments, positive issues such as the content quality and success in life were prominently featured compared to the negative themes that include religious, social, and cultural concerns. Among the negative issues that appeared in the sample comments were; lack of religiosity, irresponsible parenthood, family privacy violation, non-credibility, and profit-seeking.

It has been found that the studied home vloggers have succeeded in assuming a powerful position within the text-user-context nexus of meaning-making, in a way that incites the viewers to embrace the dominant-hegemonic discourse of their shared videos.

Altogether, this study's findings suggest that there has been a 'new fan culture' on the rise, which looks up to YouTube's 'new celebrities' as successful models in both real life and cyberspace. Additionally, the low rates of comments' engagement tone and their potential for debate put forward that Egyptian YouTube viewers merely support or reject the new media text without capturing the genuine opportunity of participatory deliberation offered by the social network.

Limitations

This study examined the comments associated with videos from the playlists of the two selected vlogs; therefore, these comments appeared to be mainly belonging to the fans of these channels. That is why the supportive attitude is highly detected in the viewers' feedback. It might be more productive and informative if comments on other videos published to review the two channels' content, are investigated.

Also, testing the comment section potentials for creating social debates, deliberation, and discussions may be more plausible if comments associated with social media posts, tackling the familial vlogging phenomenon, are examined.

Another limitation is pertinent to the ability of the channel owner to deleting the undesired comments. This controlling possibility in the hands of the video creator deprives the researchers of the opportunity of examining a wide variety of viewers' positions towards the posted content. For instance, the comment section was entirely deactivated in one of the videos that were preliminarily chosen in the current study sample.

Further Research

It is highly recommended to execute a discourse-analysis investigation of online home videos that include challenges, contests, pranks, and acting scenes to extract the values and norms conveyed through this type of visual

content.

Also, a reception-oriented field study needs to be conducted to explore the Internet users' attitudes towards these videos and their content.

To further explore the variations of the audiences' perceptions and attitudes towards these home-based videos, it might be useful to analyze relevant comments on videos that feature other YouTubers reviewing these home vlogs' content.

Finally, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the motivations that drive ordinary families to expose their lives, relations, and family members online.

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