

Should You Really be Creative on Social Media? An Empirical Investigation of User-Generated Content from TikTok

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Abstract

Creativity is seen as a panacea for success on social media. In this research, however, we find based on empirical analyses of more than 290,000 TikTok videos and two experimental studies, that originality rather harms than helps the success of user-generated content on social media. Using a novel contrastive learning approach, we determine a video's degree of originality and find that more original videos receive fewer likes on the platform. We corroborate this result in a more controlled experimental paradigm and explain that higher content originality reduces liking of both the content and the content creator because it increases psychological discomfort among viewers. This effect is attenuated by a greater popularity of a video, which increases the threshold for more original videos to be perceived as dissonant. These results are relevant to marketers aiming at increasing consumer liking of their social media content.

Keywords: *originality; cognitive dissonance; deep neural networks*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media