

Ujjval D. Rajput

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Podcast Script

Hi, my name is Ujjval, and I recently came across this TikTok where a YOUNG climate activist threw a CAKE at the Mona Lisa. While being escorted out of the building, he urged people to care for the planet. Although this act didn't SOLVE climate change, it showed how even the non-experts, particularly the youth, are concerned about it. This is part of the focus of this podcast which analyzes an article named "Showing They Care (Or Don't): Affective Publics and Ambivalent Climate Activism on TikTok". In it, four scholars from Michigan State University investigate an INSUFFICIENTLY studied topic. What is it? The use of TikTok's FEATURES and QUALITIES that raise awareness about critical issues. This includes HOW content creators leverage them to influence OUR perspectives on those issues. Ultimately, the authors concluded that it was THESE features and qualities of TikTok that made it SIMPLER for non-experts to engage in talks about global concerns. They reached this conclusion by analyzing CLIMATE related TikToks through multiple modes. In this podcast, I am going to talk about how even though TikTok users may not be experts on climate change... in terms of its core causes or solid solutions..., they still remain engaged in the conversation through their personal, humorous but also often rageous takes on the issue. Content creators ATTEMPT to ambivalently relate climate change to other environmental problems and only add to the whole climate change discussion (Hautea et al., 2021). The point is that they are potentially unaware of the differences between the two but want to put their thoughts out there, anyway. For instance, the authors mention that a video, ORIGINALLY about plastic straws, LATER claims climate change as "fake news" (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 9). In opposition, another TikTok encourages people to buy

reusable straws and captioned it with the hashtag #SaveTheTurtles (Hautea et al., 2021). This implies a standpoint in which caring about the environment reflects caring about climate change, without being explicit about it. These videos also demonstrate that the creators' knowledge of the connections between climate change and other environmental issues stays ambivalent (Hautea et al., 2021). This knowledge is then passed on to the people that consume their content. However, the ultimate point here is that people want to be involved in the discussions about climate change and its surrounding issues; whether they are against it or not. TikTok creators also use HUMOUR not only as a way to invite more people to their content, but also to diffuse the stress from the talk about climate change. The authors found that they "often combined sincere appeals with humorous text or visuals. ... [This] playful sincerity has the ... effect of improving the alarming appeal of ... climate change" (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 8). For instance, one of the videos shows a young man playing a turtle with many plastic straws jammed into his mouth (Hautea et al., 2021). And there are multiple videos where "Baby Boomers are frequently portrayed ... [negatively], depicted as the target of jokes" (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 9). Such jokes are intended to teach responsibility to the younger generations on TikTok, rather than to showcase boomers as ignorant about climate change. In fact, the article suggests that "regardless of which generation is at fault for the current state of the Earth, the outcome is the same: nature bears the consequences" (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 10). In these times, it is ever so important to grab the attention of as many people as possible, and what better way to do it than COMEDY? Many TikToks reflect people's anger at not knowing what to do and because of the uncertainty about the future of climate change. For example, there is a TikTok which criticizes an older generation for refusing to accept responsibility ... for their role in climate change (Hautea et al., 2021). Its caption is "society is so cruel" (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 11). In this case, it is justified to be pissed off as we all know what

would happen if nobody takes responsibility for it. What, you ask? A flood of other problems that climate change brings with itself. This is like a “frustration of knowing a problem exists and yet lacking the resources, as an individual, to enact meaningful change” (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 10). This is why the article even goes on to say that there “is a sense of ... hopelessness about ... [this] global situation” (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 10). After all this, it is clear as to why we need users on platforms like TikTok to continue to participate ... in the discussion about climate change. As it is NOW, more than EVER BEFORE, that the issue needs our immediate attention.

References

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