&

Alyssa Grieder

LURKING

Comments and Reactions in the Digital Realm

10:20 AM

yo lurker wassup!

are you talking about me?

hell yeah, i'm talking about you, who else would i be talking about man??

Read 10:22 AM

7:48 PM

dafuq? don't you wanna text me back?

my bad, what even is a lurker bro?

Well first things first, there is this zine that explores the microtrend *Lurking*. The microtrend reframes the social and cultural practice of *lurking* as a significant element of digital spaces.

Lurking, by definition, often evokes images of secrecy and hidden intent: moving unnoticed, observing from the shadows, and engaging without acknowledgment. But in the context of digital spaces, *lurking* takes on a much broader and less threatening meaning. It is the act of consuming media, scrolling through endless comment threads, watching reaction videos, or thinking about the heated online debates. It moves fluidly between visibility and invisibility, between passive observation and active engagement.
This project redefines *lurking* as an significant element of digital culture, one that plays an essential role in shaping how we interact, create, and consume online. Through hindsight, insight, and foresight, this project will reveal how *lurking* not only reflects our online behaviours but also foreshadows the direction of digital interaction itself.

So next time you're scrolling, watching, or silently reacting, consider this: you are not just killing time, you are shaping culture. Welcome to the hidden (not so hidden) world of *Lurking*.

bet, sounds good, i'll take a look at this zine for sure! thanks
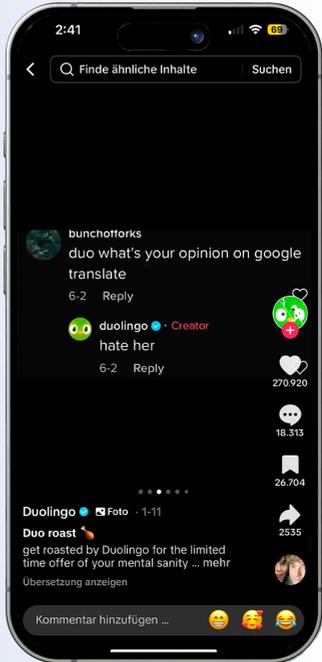😘

HINDSIGHT

p. 6-8

INSIGHT

p. 9-11
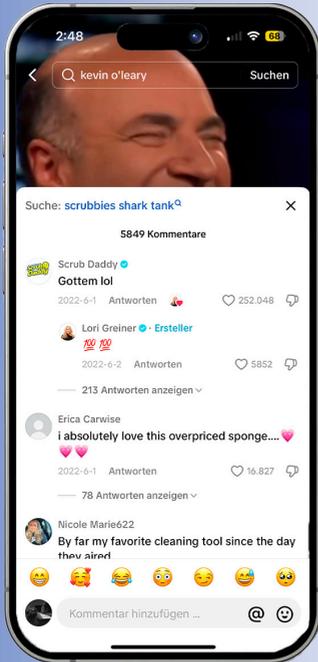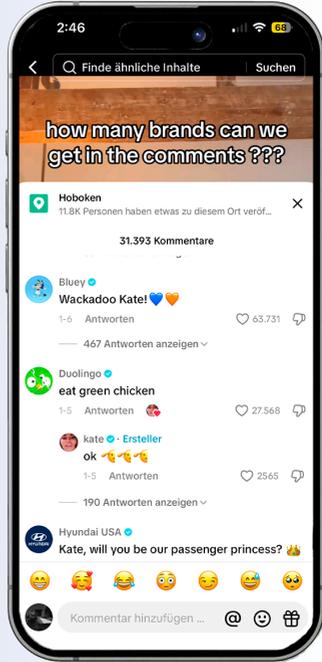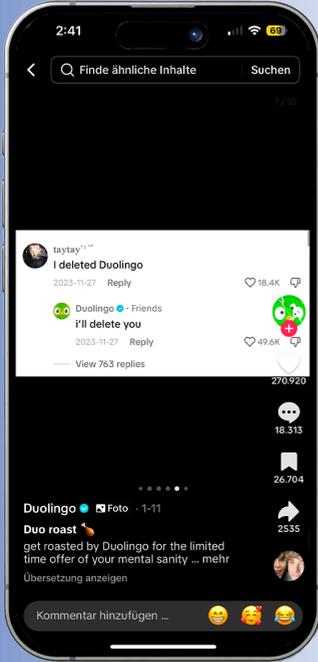
FORESIGHT

p. 14-15

SOURCES

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HINDSIGHT

> The Rise of Reaction Culture

The rise of reaction culture, defined by reaction videos, comment sections, and digital discussions, can be traced back to the rise of early social media and online platforms. Sites like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok revolutionised content consumption by encouraging participation. They allowed users to engage not just by watching or reading but by responding through videos, comments, or real-time interactions. This shift created a new form of dialogue, enabling users to share their thoughts and emotions immediately, forming today's highly interactive online culture. Reaction culture began to reshape how we communicate, turning passive audiences into active participants. In the early 2000s, comment sections were relatively rare; only 8 to 30 percent of news sites had them. A decade later, that figure had risen to 85 percent, reflecting the growing importance of interactivity.

> Comment Sections as Spaces for Discourse

Comment sections have grown into vital spaces for public participation and social exchange. They allow users to express opinions and engage in discussions that often extend far beyond the original content. Over time, these sections became forums for intense and sometimes controversial exchanges, marking the rise of reactions as an independent cultural practice. These digital spaces have become arenas for performative interactions, where users craft comments not only to share their thoughts but to gain likes, followers, or status within online communities. Viral comments are sometimes more entertaining than the original content, highlighting how the audience now shapes the value of a post.

This cultural shift has even influenced marketing strategies. Brands like Netflix, Duolingo and many more, use comment sections creatively, posting humorous or relatable comments, even on content unrelated to them. By doing so, they humanise their brands and capture attention in playful ways.
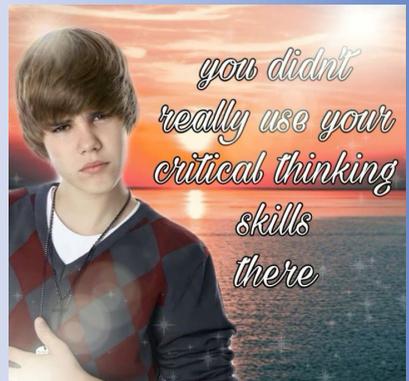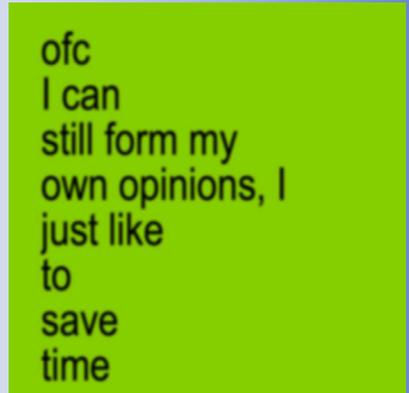
Screenshot 1 (2:41)

Finde ähnliche Inhalte — Suchen

7 / 10

taytay`ᵀ`ᵂ
I deleted Duolingo
2023-11-27 · Reply — 18.4K

Duolingo ✓ · Friends
i'll delete you
2023-11-27 · Reply — 49.6K

View 763 replies

270.920
18.313
26.704
2535

Duolingo ✓ 🖼 Foto · 1-11
Duo roast 🔥
get roasted by Duolingo for the limited time offer of your mental sanity … mehr
Übersetzung anzeigen

Kommentar hinzufügen …   😂 🥰 😂

Screenshot 2 (2:46)

Finde ähnliche Inhalte — Suchen

how many brands can we get in the comments ???

📍 Hoboken
11.8K Personen haben etwas zu diesem Ort veröf… ✕

31.393 Kommentare

Bluey ✓ 🐾
Wackadoo Kate! 💙🧡
1-6 Antworten — 63.731
467 Antworten anzeigen ⌄

Duolingo ✓
eat green chicken
1-5 Antworten 🐔 — 27.568

kate ✓ · Ersteller
ok 🍗🍗🍗
1-5 Antworten — 2565
190 Antworten anzeigen ⌄

Hyundai USA ✓
Kate, will you be our passenger princess? 🔥
😄 🥰 😂 🥺 😏 😄 🥺

Kommentar hinzufügen …   @ 😊 🎁

Screenshot 3 (2:48)

kevin o'leary — Suchen

Suche: scrubbies shark tank 🔍   ✕

5849 Kommentare

Scrub Daddy ✓
Gottem lol
2022-6-1 Antworten 🔥 — 252.048

Lori Greiner ✓ · Ersteller
💯💯
2022-6-2 Antworten — 5852
213 Antworten anzeigen ⌄

Erica Carwise
i absolutely love this overpriced sponge…. 💗💗💗
2022-6-1 Antworten — 16.827
78 Antworten anzeigen ⌄

Nicole Marie622
By far my favorite cleaning tool since the day they aired
😄 🥰 😂 🥺 😏 😄 🥺

Kommentar hinzufügen …   @ 😊

Screenshot 4 (2:41)

Finde ähnliche Inhalte — Suchen

bunchoforks
duo what's your opinion on google translate
6-2 Reply

duolingo ✓ · Creator
hate her
6-2 Reply

270.920
18.313
26.704
2535

Duolingo ✓ 🖼 Foto · 1-11
Duo roast 🔥
get roasted by Duolingo for the limited time offer of your mental sanity … mehr
Übersetzung anzeigen

Kommentar hinzufügen …   😂 🥰 😂

> *The Shift from Content to Reaction*

The act of reacting to content has become a central aspect of today's digital culture, particularly through reaction videos on platforms like YouTube and social media. These videos, where individuals interpret or comment on existing content, have gained immense popularity and are getting millions of views. We are even starting to see reactions to reaction videos. This trend highlights the growing desire for multiple perspectives, as people often seek reactions to confirm or challenge their own views.

An important key word here is interpassivity, which is the direct opposite of interactivity and is a form of delegation. Interpassivity is the feeling that something is already taken care of, so you get the allowance to do nothing about it and just observe. So when people post their reaction to something, they are not only showing us their reaction, but also their opinion and values. What is going to happen if we keep consuming „pre-chewed" content?

This shift is part of a larger trend of democratised communication made possible by social media, allowing anyone to participate in public discourse, regardless of status or expertise. While this has created a lot places for very diverse opinions, it has also brought challenges such as the spread of misinformation and hate speech.

INSIGHT

Comment Sections as a Mirror of Society

Comment sections often highlight trends like humour, memes, and debates on topics such as politics, identity, and ethics.
These spaces also face significant challenges. Anonymity enables users to post without accountability, which can lead to harmful or offensive behaviour. Algorithms are designed to prioritise highly engaged content, regardless of whether the reactions are positive or negative. This creates an environment where negativity and misinformation can overshadow meaningful discussions.
Such issues have prompted platforms like NPR, The Guardian, and VICE News to shut down their comment sections completely, due to the prevalence of hateful or irrelevant content. While moderation could address some concerns, it introduces logistical costs and raises ethical questions about censorship. Despite their flaws, many argue that these spaces remain vital for public discourse, showcasing the creative and democratic potential of online communication.

> Psychology of Reaction – Why Do We React?

Human reactions in digital spaces are driven by psychological needs and social dynamics. Actions like liking, commenting, or sharing fulfil the innate need for connection and validation. Social platforms exploit this by triggering the brain's reward system, creating a cycle of engagement. Dopamine is released and gives us a sense of accomplishment, when we see any notifications, and we start hoping for the next one already.
This is another way for brands to get stuck in our minds, the more interactive their social media presence is, the more we want to hop on their journey and see in what ways we will be able to engage with them online and give us a sense of belonging.
Reactions also provide a quick way for individuals to express themselves, becoming part of a broader online conversation.

graceebooks

today my diet has consisted of five guys and popyes so im probably gonna live forever

vegan-gore

u ate...... 5 whole people........

graceebooks

6 counting popeye

user33342069333

i was on shrooms and i had a whole conversation telepathically with my cat about her trauma and she's literally different now

> *The Economy and Censoring of Reaction*

Just Lucid

What is your cats breed?

Liked by creator

Jenna Curtis · Creator

orange

Platforms thrive on user engagement, with every interaction we are feeding into algorithms that amplify attention-grabbing content. This dynamic makes reactions essential for brands and creators, helping them expand their reach and monetise their presence. The system often rewards emotional and sensational responses, prioritising provocative content.

A polarising example for this is Nara Smith, she is an influencer that started sharing her recipes that she cooks at home, the reason she got so popular so fast, is that she does a lot of things from scratch. She is doing things from scratch like bubble gum, Coca-Cola, and much more. She established herself through the reaction of everyone online, there were as much people loving it as people hating it, and that is what got Nara Smith to the point, where she is today.

While engagement appears universally accessible, there are concerning limitations. An example lies in the censorship issues surrounding the ongoing genocide in Palestine. Many reports suggest that platforms, particularly those under Meta (Instagram and Facebook), suppress content related to Palestine.

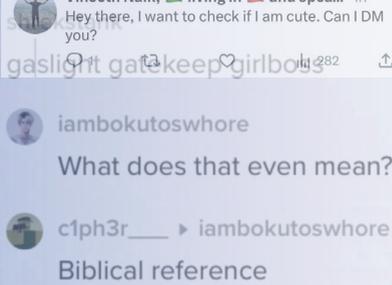Users documenting or sharing information about the situation have reported shadow banning, content removal, audio suppression, and even account deactivations. Meta's content policies, which include prohibiting the glorification, support, and representation of designated groups or individuals, are often criticised for their vague and blurry definitions and seem to be islamophobic. These policies are suppressing voices that should be heard. This has raised ethical questions about whether social media can genuinely function as an open space for free expression.

For further reading and a deeper understanding of these issues, consider exploring the sources mentioned at the end of the zine.

Bhumika @thisisbhumika · 3h
I saw a cute guy flirting in my comment section with a girl and he asked her if he can directly dm her and i turned off the comments. If I can't find love, no one can.
160   �th2 60   ♡ 1,071   ılı 53K

Aditi Satwat @aditi_satwat · 2h
That is so evil. I love it.
2   �thi   ♥ 8   ılı 3,494

Bhumika @thisisbhumika · 2h
I'll do it again 😂
1   �thi   ♡ 2   ılı 3,319

Aditi Satwat @aditi_satwat · 2h
You should. Def.
1   �thi   ♡   ılı 436

Vineeth Naik, 🇮🇳 living in 🇮🇩 and spea... · 1h
Hey there, I want to check if I am cute. Can I DM you?
1   �thi   ♡   ılı 282

gaslight gatekeep girlboss

iambokutoswhore
What does that even mean?

c1ph3r____ ▸ iambokutoswhore
Biblical reference

lindseyszn
this song makes me feel so good dude
View replies (11) ⌄

murdocsbathwater
this song put me in immense pain
View replies (7) ⌄

79331 comments   ✕

garylee1_
am he's dad i need it now
17h Reply
View replies (371) ⌄
♥ 107.2K

pretendingtobegarylee
Leave it there. I'll pick it up in the morning.
20h Reply
View replies (95) ⌄
♡ 88.2K

harrylee_0
Hello dear it's Gary's Grandma! I can take the Wallet!
15h Reply
View replies (484) ⌄
♡ 92.0K

1lyas.61
hey i'm his mom you can give it to me
16h Reply
View replies (363) ⌄
♡ 82.8K

lord_gonk_of_britannia
They having a family reunion in the comments- 👀
15h Reply
♡ 59.6K

> *Creativity and Reaction*

Reactions have become a big part of digital creativity, fundamentally reshaping how content is consumed and transformed. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok empower creators to reinterpret original material through reaction videos, which often infuse humour, personal insights, or cultural critique. These added layers of meaning can elevate reaction content to a level that rivals or even surpasses the original.

While reaction content is typically rooted in entertainment, it has also been used as a tool for raising awareness about social and political issues.

For example, within the "oddly satisfying" video genre, where creators react to mesmerising visuals, some individuals have cleverly subverted the format to share urgent messages.

By starting their videos with satisfying imagery that holds the viewer's attention, they transition to discussing important issues or sharing calls to action. This strategic use of the algorithm exemplifies how creators can manipulate platform dynamics to amplify silenced voices or messages that might otherwise be suppressed. Such innovative approaches illustrate the adaptability of reaction culture. It not only drives entertainment but also highlights how users can creatively exploit digital systems to serve their purposes, whether for art, advocacy, or awareness.

idk about irritating...

they literally were saying to get out of the bubble, you're kinda missing the whole point.

I AGREE 100%

I DISAGREE 200%

WE URGENTLY NEED

THINGS CAN BE

SPACES THAT ARE

IRRITATING.

THE MAIN THING IS TO

BUBBLE.

What does „bubble" mean? There is always new words coming, i can't keep up.

that's damn right!!

we already have chaotic spaces, don't need more of those :/

it depends so much on where you live, ever thought about other places other than the place where you live?

good point, I only thought about my perspective..where do you live?

SPACES WHERE NEW CREATED. CHAOTIC, DIVERSE AND

GET OUT OF THE

> *The Decline of Original Content*

If reaction videos continue to grow in popularity, we could envision a future where originality transitions into a niche domain. Already, some creators produce original content designed with potential reactions in mind. This trend may evolve further, with a significant portion of original works crafted explicitly to evoke reactionary responses, blending the lines between creation and reception.

Platforms might also adapt by providing more automated tools for engagement. For instance, users could be offered AI-generated suggestions for comments tailored to the content of specific videos, moving beyond simple emoji reactions. This could make interactions feel more seamless yet risk homogenising the creative discourse.

The proliferation of reaction-based content could also lead to audience fatigue, driving a demand for platforms that celebrate originality without the noise of reactions or commentary. A dedicated social media space for pure content consumption, without options for commenting, liking, or sharing, might emerge as a sanctuary for users seeking to appreciate art, videos, or literature in their original form. These platforms could prioritise depth and quality, catering to a growing audience disillusioned with reaction-centric, fast paced digital environments.

> *The Amplification of Social Isolation*

Digital communication has been a part of our lives for decades, but its impact on personal connections has become increasingly evident. COVID-19 represented a peak in social isolation due to physical distancing measures, but even as society has reopened, the effects of digital dependency linger. With the unending rise of digitalisation, social isolation continues to grow, as people rely more on online interactions than face-to-face connections. Platforms pushing reaction videos and online comment threads enable individuals to find communities that resonate with the same beliefs and perspectives. While this can create a sense of belonging, it also poses the risk of reducing wanting to engage with diverse perspectives in real-life settings. Why venture outside to meet new people when you can find curated validation and shared opinions online? This pattern, while comforting to some, could lead to a future where online interaction dominates, further normalising social withdrawal and not being open to different perspectives. Technologies like virtual reality, AI-driven engagement tools, or immersive platforms could make staying online even more appealing, offering substitutes for real-world experiences. This shift could potentially erode the importance of in-person social networks and deepen issues related to mental health and loneliness.

There is already a growing counterculture advocating for disconnecting from digital spaces. Movements promoting social media detoxes or even permanent deletion of accounts are gaining attraction, encouraging individuals to reclaim time and energy for offline relationships and activities.
Balancing the benefits of digital communication with its potential to isolate remains a critical challenge for the future. Whether through mindful use of technology or intentional efforts to nurture real-world connections, there is still a lot to figure out as a society on how to navigate in an increasingly digitalised world.

QUELLEN

Websites:

https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/lurk
https://www.oktopost.com/glossary/what-are-social-media-reactions
https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/reacting-to-reactions/
https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2024/06/20/how-brands-are-using-the-comments-sections-to-drive-results
https://about.squareoffs.com/2020/06/09/why-traditional-comment-sections-dont-work-anymore/
https://www.techsmith.com/blog/reaction-video/?srsltid=AfmBOorr3A-c953uRHnqhh9IY1DyyZrVJ14KPR2P3Ac57sbTyx8mimb7B
https://www.quora.com/I-notice-reaction-videos-on-YouTube-always-have-lots-of-views-Why-do-people-love-watching-other-people-react-to-things

Further reading about censorship in the context of Palestine:

https://www.accessnow.org/publication/how-meta-censors-palestinian-voices/
https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/12/21/metas-broken-promises/systemic-censorship-palestine-content-instagram-and
https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/10/24/shadowbanning-are-social-media-giants-censoring-pro-palestine-voices
https://mashable.com/article/instagram-shadowbanning-censor-israel-palestine

Accounts:

https://www.youtube.com/@TalkingTalkTuah
https://www.tiktok.com/@naraazizasmith

Articles:

Weber, P. (2014). Discussions in the comments section: Factors influencing participation and interactivity in online newspapers' reader comments. New Media & Society, 16(6), 941-957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813495165
https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/19-no-comment-case-study3.pdf
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382034480_Digital_culture_in_the_virtual_space

Editorial

Die 14 &zines explorieren und illustrieren 14 Microtrends, die sich im Kontext der Pleasure Renaissance mit gegenwärtigen Praktiken des Vergnügens auseinandersetzen. Jedes &zine gibt einen Einblick in die Motive und Kontexte, die einen der 14 Microtrends prägen.
Es versammelt Phänomene, in denen Microtrend sichtbar wird und skizziert wie er sich zukünftig entwickeln könnte.

some food for thought, for the ones who are chronically online