YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Y&R 2025 SEMINAR SERIES

12 March: Suchetana Sinha

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The Institutionalized Practice of Online Trolling: A Study on YouTube's Reaction Content



Online trolling has surpassed anonymity, seeped into mainstream media, and is beyond a mere communicative practice. It is no longer an individual-led, one-time event of emotional outrage. The term 'trolling' has derived its meaning in the realm of the internet, but its ethos can be detected offline, rooted in cultural products such as theatre and comedy or public sphere activities, such as the rhetorics of debate. Therefore, trolling is treated as a social practice, and the features once found in the physical spaces before the advent of convergence media are now produced and distributed for consumption in the institutionalised setting of YouTube.
Reaction content - a genre not officially recognised by the platform, unlike education, lifestyle, travel, gaming, and other categories, is the chosen localized context to study the phenomenon. The study proposes that YouTube reaction videos depict troll-like behaviors, where the creator provides commentary on content created by others, implying a culture of copy. Under the interpretative paradigm, a qualitative inquiry undertakes a textual analysis of a sample of reaction videos and their corresponding audience response in the comments section to answer the research question: How do reaction videos on YouTube and its audience co-construct, commodify, and normalise the social practice of online trolling?

Biography

After a few years in advertising—a field deeply rooted in marketing—I discovered my true passion lay in the realm of communication. I became particularly fascinated by social media, online behaviours, and the evolving landscape of digital cultures. In 2021, I bid farewell to copywriting and embarked on a new academic journey.
So far, my PhD experience has revealed a natural affinity for qualitative research, and I find immense fulfilment in contributing to contemporary knowledge creation. In a world that is evolving at an unprecedented pace, I am driven by the opportunity to explore, analyse, and make sense of these rapid shifts—an intellectual pursuit that feels both urgent and rewarding.

12 March, 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Parramatta South EB.G.22 & online

Lunch will be provided