

Youthful, Knowledgeable and Compassionate: Analysis of Social Media Identities Performed by the Youth through Instagram

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Abstract: Taking advantage of the creativity and the freedom available on social media platforms, the development of social media literacy could expand the traditional definitions of media literacy (the ability to access, analyse, and produce media) to incorporate the promotion of civic engagement leading to social change. This study will analyse how a group of university students in Hong Kong performs their youthful and socially-conscious identities on the social media application, Instagram (IG). The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDS) is adopted to analyse the English version of the IG posts from the inception of TEDxEncompassHK's Instagram account, to its TEDx talk main event on 18 October 2020. The linguistic strategies commonly used in the posts are identified and categorized to show the prominent identities conveyed: youthful and playful, knowledgeable, and literate, compassionate and radical. The findings of this study can illustrate the important role played by social media literacy to support and encourage civic engagement through using and producing multimedia messages. While such a production is often considered informal learning, this research aims to suggest that a strategic and conscious incorporation of social media literacy development into formal education could encourage students' creativity and critical thinking, and also provide a new lens for understanding rhetoric in the prevalence of social media.

Keywords: Instagram, social media literary, creativity, civic engagement, identity, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

1. Introduction

Given the current prevalence of social media, it is important to examine how one of its predominant user populations—young people—nurtures and shows social media literacies in a way that allows them to bear social responsibilities to their local community and also practice civic engagement in issues of a global interest and for the global audience. Social media not only allows users to share their multimedia materials, namely photos, videos, and texts, but also provides a free space for users to develop identities for themselves, or the causes they represent in a way they may not be able to do in real life.

The purpose of this study is to analyze a group of university students in Hong Kong who are identified as an Instagram (IG) account authors especially recruited to engage in a global initiative, a part of an international movement dedicated to putting the climate crisis and its solutions on the agenda. A wide range of linguistic strategies identified in this study exhibit the social media literacies developed by the young IG authors in ways, showing their awareness of the social and civic responsibilities that they bear while engaging in a local event built upon a global initiative targeting both local and global audiences. Through analyzing the linguistic strategies deployed and the corresponding images created, this study illustrates how educators and students can fully utilize the potential of social media to bear their social responsibility to their community and practice civic engagement in global issues.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Literacy

The definition of “media literacy” has changed over time, especially as media itself has been revolutionized, both in quality and in quantity, with the birth and growth of the Internet. Although various definitions exist, scholars all agree that the notion of media literacy has expanded from just describing a user’s one-sided perspective, to encompassing a user’s multi-faceted, interactive ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act upon content across all possible forms of communication (Aufderheide, 1993; National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2019). This consensus is further reflected in the detailed definition of media literacy devised by the European Charter for Media Literacy in 2009, which aims to promote the importance of media literacy in education, culture, politics, and social and economic policymaking. According to the Charter, media-literate people are expected to:

- use media technologies effectively to access, store, retrieve, and share content to meet their individual and community needs and interests;
- gain access to, and make informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources;
- understand how and why media content is produced;
- critically analyze the techniques, languages, and conventions used by the media, and the messages they convey;
- use media creatively to express and communicate ideas, information, and opinions;
- identify, and avoid or challenge, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive, or harmful; and
- make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civic responsibilities.

Based on this definition, being media literate is more than just being able to understand the surface texts, or even the sub-texts, presented across all forms of communication. Rather, media literacy is also about exercising one’s critical and analytical abilities to demystify media messages; to counteract possible manipulations regarding the inclusion, exclusion, or stereotypes imposed by the media, whether intentional or not; and to actively create new meanings that maximize one’s enjoyment and profit from media messaging (Buckingham, 2013; Cappello, 2017).

2.2 New Media Literacy

Digital media, also known as new media, is one of the most significant up-and-coming strands of media in the 21st century. Compared to traditional media, this new form of media has not only made information more accessible thanks to the Internet, but also further complicated the notion of media literacy. As a combination of an ever-growing number of organic socio-cultural environments where messages are digitally created and shared (Koc & Barut, 2016), and produced by network technologies, new media is characterized by a culture of convergence. Through new media, consumers or users become active media producers by interacting with other users, producing or reproducing their own multimedia messages (including texts, images, and videos), and sharing these messages with other users anytime and anywhere (Tugtekin & Koc, 2019). Therefore, on top of the multilayered definition proposed by the European Charter for Media Literacy (2019), a current definition of being media literate also includes new media literacy (NML), which entails acting and reacting as critical, creative,

and responsible digital citizens when receiving, sharing and producing media content across new media platforms.

The broadened scope of NML requires an updated—if not entirely new—theoretical framework and measurement instrument for the analysis of media literacy. The study by Chen et al. (2011) in particular has been one of the most significant, serving as the basis for studies by several other researchers, who have adapted its ideas to suit changing needs with regards to the time, the socio-cultural context, and the form of media communication. Chen et al. (2011) propose a NML framework comprising two continua, consuming and prosuming. While consuming focuses on users’ consumptive abilities—namely reading and writing (Buckingham, 2003; Burn & Durran, 2007), prosuming highlights the ability to critically and constructively question and evaluate messages, in addition to the tools that deliver them (Tugketin & Koc, 2019). Each of the continua also has two aspects—functional and critical—as endpoints, yielding a total of four distinct NML dimensions: functional consuming (FC), critical consuming (CC), functional prosuming (FP), and critical prosuming (CP). Lin et al. (2013) further elaborated on the framework by Chen et al. (2011) through explaining the four dimensions using ten detailed indicators, assigning to each dimension two or three concrete indicators.

Table 1. Lin et al., (2013)’s refined framework of Chen et al. (2011)’s new media literacy (NML)

Critical Consuming: Evaluate; Synthesize; Analyze	Critical Prosuming: Create; Participate
Functional Consuming: Understand; Consume	Functional Prosuming Prosume; Produce; Distribute

Capitalizing on the contemporary and comprehensive nature of the theoretical frameworks developed by Chen et al. (2011) and Lin et al. (2013), researchers began to apply them in learning about NML formation among one of the largest new media user groups: students. For instance, hoping to develop a theoretically grounded New Media Literacy Scale (NMLS) in a similar Asian context, Koc and Barut (2016) surveyed 1,226 university students in Turkey with a 35-item NMLS consisting of the four dimensions proposed by Chen et al. (2011) and Lin et al. (2013). Following their own 2011 study, Chen et al. (2018) conducted another large-scale study on 4,577 Singaporean students, which represented one-seventh of schools in the country. Based on their own prior survey and Lin et al. (2013)’s refined NML theoretical framework, Chen et al. (2018) aimed to first reveal the current NML levels of Singaporean students and then examine the factors affecting NML formation, with the goal of facilitating new media education policies in Singapore. As the pioneering large-scale research study in an Asian context on this subject, Chen et al. (2018) point out that while the Singaporean students performed well in terms of NML technical skills, their criticality and creativity need to be addressed further.

Other small-scale studies on NML have been conducted across Asia and they share one similarity: the schooling context provides fertile grounds for the study of NML, especially the evaluation of NML education. For example, Shi (2012) explored the content and training for NML education programs aimed at 90s-generation university students. On top of student NML levels, Zhang (2015) revealed the countermeasures adopted by college counsellors. Lastly, Lau (2017) looked at the evaluation and promotion of NML by college teachers. Regardless of the studies’ scale, they all point to one of the same findings that on top of the roles of a reader or a writer (the functional aspect of the NML framework), new media offers them opportunities to take up the producer role so they can interact with, share, and produce media messages instantaneously. This has significantly transformed the dynamics in a school context. Whereas teachers or similar authority figures would usually take charge of the curricula, with students being recipients, nowadays students can take initiative to utilize their cultural and social capital to make their voices heard. Given that widely-accessible platforms within new media formats include social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter; the notion of social media literacy has consequently emerged, specifically referring to the competencies that social media users ought to be equipped with.

2.3 Social Media Literacy

Similar to the core values of new media literacy (NML), namely the multi-literacies of critically creating, sharing, processing, analyzing, and evaluating messages and meanings (Jenkins, 2006) demonstrated by users in any internet-related form of communication, social media literacy refers to such various literacies primarily shown and developed in social media platforms or social networking sites. While new media is any media in their digital form, such as online newspapers, blogs or streaming applications, the social practices adopted by users to communicate with each other on the social media can be considered relatively more interactive and more instant. Various definitions of social media literacy are similar in that they are never limited to just one kind of competency. For example, Vanwynsberghe et al. define social media literacy as “the technical and cognitive competencies users need to use social media in an effective and efficient way for social interaction and communication on the web” (2015, p. 85). While technical competencies are the skills for producing and sharing social media messages, cognitive competencies refer to how users analyze and evaluate such messages (Livingstone, 2004) to creatively and critically comprehend and (re)produce social media content, considering its context, relevance, and trustworthiness (Vanwynsberghe, 2014). On top of these competencies, social and ethical skills are also crucial for the critical evaluation of social media (Hobbs, 2010; McDougall, Berger, Fraser, & Zezulkova, 2015).

2.4 Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement

Considering the various skills that a social media-literate person is expected to have, particularly social and ethical skills, it is reasonable to capitalize on the participatory power of social media, as well as to incorporate social responsibility and civic engagement into the discussion and formation of social media literacy. Without the social and ethical responsibilities to act for social justice, social media users may become passive receivers of dominant social media content or even reproducers of mainstream ideologies. Without concrete actions aimed at embedding and engaging oneself in civic activities to entice social or political change, the fulfillment of social responsibility may just remain a theory. Media literacy scholars also support the notion that bearing social responsibility and engaging in civic action exhibits social media literacy. In defining digital media literacies, Hobbs (2010) stresses the importance of reflection and action. Reflection refers to “applying social responsibility and ethical principles to one’s own identity and lived experience, communication behavior and conduct”, while action is defined as “working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, the workplace, and the community, and participating as a member of a community at local, regional, national, and international levels” (Hobbs, 2010, p. 19). This extended definition of digital media literacies significantly broadens the purpose of social media, from the satisfaction of individual user needs across different social media platforms to the mission of serving more people other than themselves. Focusing particularly on youth engagement and participation in digital culture, Mihailidis (2014) concurs with and expands the notion of the media citizen to include the five As: access, awareness, assessment, appreciation, and action. While the first four items in Mihailidis’ (2014) 5A framework embody the need for social media users to bear social responsibility, the last item of action echoes Hobbs’ (2010) emphasis of action in the concept of digital media literacies.

Since the 2000s, various studies have put theories of social media literacy into action, aiming to effect social responsibility and civic engagement among students. A study by Clark and Russell (2013) exemplifies Hobbs (2010)’s focus on reflection and action by first having their undergraduate students learn about various topics on social media literacy in a media literacy course, and then putting the students into teams to implement service learning across middle and high schools in rural areas. In designing unconventional counselling services for younger students, the undergraduates were asked to exercise their creativity and critical thinking to incorporate their media literary course content within their interactive activities. According to Clark and Russell (2013), the outcome of the course was satisfactory, as their undergraduate students gained civic engagement experience through experiential education. Their study also suggests that students can become more critical and creative digital media users when they have an audience (the rural school students in this case) for whom they are responsible.

Similarly, the pilot study by McLean et al. (2017) incorporated social media literacy into a formal curriculum. 64 girls, with a median age of about 13, received three social media literacy intervention lessons, while 37 other girls in the control group received regular classes. The pilot study revealed significant differences in awareness, where intervention group participants showed a relatively stronger awareness of body image, disordered eating, and media literacy, compared to the control group.

The formal social media literacy lessons in the studies by Clark & Russell (2013) and McLean et al. (2017) demonstrate that instilling social media literacies among the younger generation not only develops their consumptive abilities (Buckingham, 2003; Burn & Durran, 2007; Chen et al., 2011), but also, or more importantly so, their prosuming abilities (Chen et al., 2011; Tugketin & Koc, 2019) as they are encouraged to critically access, share, and produce messages on social media platforms. Even more importantly, the potential of the vast population of youth users, when coupled with the equally enormous potential of social media platforms, can be harnessed to use social media for civic engagement practices (MacArthur, 2006). For example, young social media users can establish networks with and for their like-minded peers, engage in mobilization activities (Jenkins et al., 2016; Lane & Dal Cin, 2018), or produce or engage in collaborative projects such as crowdsourced civic participation (Benkler, 2005; Papacharissi, 2010; Raby et al., 2018). Kiran and Manisha (2020) summarize civic participation on different social media platforms as “a discursive, innovative, personalized form of engaging with a civic cause from a localized perspective and in the presence of a larger peer group created by the individuals” (2020, p. 400). Civic engagement practices can be as simple as visiting websites through hyperlinks, as well as liking, sharing, or reposting any media messages; these practices can already make them civic actors performing discursive actions (Kiran & Manisha, 2020).

However, the authenticity of discursive actions performed on social media is still questionable. As Jenkins et al. (2016) contend, not all discursive participatory action can be categorized as civic engagement practices. Some discursive actions are even considered low quality or opinionated (Slimbach, 2005; Sustain, 2007; Keen, 2010). Moreover, according to a systematic literature review of 54 publications on digital literacy competencies, Manca et al. (2021) reveal that only a limited number of studies examined the skills specific to a particular social media platform, and only a few focused on the development of social media literacies through participation (also known as situated, context-dependent social media practices); most studies otherwise examined decontextualized practices in which such literacies are obtained. This research gap is echoed in the literature review above on the studies by Clark & Russell (2013) and McLean et al. (2017), in which social media literacies were being formally incorporated into the curriculum. Although a conscious move to incorporate social media literacies into teaching and learning practices can affect pedagogical advancement, how young people draw upon their own experiences and realities to make their public voices (Kiran & Manisha, 2020) heard in a natural setting or in a virtual public sphere where they feel more at ease, rather than in a formal educational setting, could be even more informative regarding how they perform and create their identities for not only local audiences, but also global audiences.

The current study, therefore, probes into the authentic voices made by young social media users outside an educational setting. It focuses on a group of young social media users who were intentionally recruited to participate in a global civic engagement project committed to accelerate solutions for the climate crisis. Their social media messages were created with the intention of being shared on their chosen social media platform, namely Instagram (IG). Taking advantage of the transformative and participatory power of social media to incorporate social responsibility and civic engagement, this study aims to uncover how a group of university students in Hong Kong demonstrate their social media literacy by constructing their identities on a social media application for local and global audiences.

3. Methodology

This study adopts Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its methodology, together with its three-level textual analysis, namely description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 1992). Focusing on the role of language in society and the ways language is used to create power, CDA is a qualitative, interpretative, and constructionist strand of discourse analysis that especially examines

social phenomena (Hardy et al., 2004). As a research method for studying texts in relation to their social context (Bouvier & Machin, 2018), CDA is therefore suitable for analyzing a series of IG posts devoted particularly to promoting a global initiative on accelerating solutions to a major social cause, namely the climate change crisis. CDA also analyzes language as a vehicle of social practice in which power, inequality, and dominance are intricately reproduced or resisted (Janks, 1997; van Dijk, 2008). Looking at the production of social constructions of reality (Hardy et al., 2004), CDA can shed light on how the linguistic strategies adopted by the young authors of the IG posts in this study can contribute to the construction of their own identities and voices in the virtual public sphere provided by the IG platform.

In response to the prevalence of social media, the discourse studied under CDA is being expanding from traditional media texts to the multimodal nature of digital communication, while also considering the nonlinear nature of texts (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). This study, however, only focuses on the traditional texts because of the scale of this research. CDA could still prove its applicability to this study because its core objective, even when applied to social media, remains the same: to uncover how the different modes of digital communication are being described, interpreted, and explained in relation to power relations such as class, race, and gender (Bouvier & Machin, 2018).

This research studies the English posts of an Instagram (IG) account especially established to support and promote a local TEDx event, TEDxEncompassHK, organized by a social enterprise in Hong Kong called EncompassHK (Appendix I). This local event was organized in response to TEDxCountdown, an initiative of TED's especially for the year of 2020. This is a global movement endeavored to find ways to shift, more rapidly, to a world with net zero greenhouse emissions and tackle the climate crisis. With the main event taking place in early October 2020 in Norway, hundreds of satellite events were being hosted and organized by local communities around the world, upon a TEDx official license. TEDxEncompassHK was one of the four local events licensed by TED in Hong Kong, in 2020. The organizer, EncompassHK, is a licensed social enterprise advocating for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by offering training and consultancy services to educate and support organizations to be diversified and inclusive. With its extensive connections in the higher education sector in Hong Kong, TEDxEncompassHK managed to recruit over 20 students studying in both government-funded and self-financed universities in Hong Kong, assisting with this TEDx event in different capacities, such as managing its social media platforms, curating, communicating with TEDxEncompassHK's 10 speakers (Appendix II). With EncompassHK's founder and her personal friends who are the working adults, TEDxEncompassHK was the only one Countdown event in Hong Kong which was predominantly engineered by a group of university students in Hong Kong, aged from 19 to 22.

The IG account houses 30 posts written in both spoken Cantonese style and English, together with a range of hashtags and emojis. They serve the purposes of giving backgrounds of this global and local intuitive, introducing speakers, endorsers, the MC and acknowledging the organizing team, with the first being posted on 11 August, 2020, and the last on 19 October 2020 (one day after TEDxEncompassHK's main event on 18 October 2020).

The corpus for this study is the 10 posts written in English featuring the 10 speaker introductions, consisting of 1,334 English words (Appendix IIIa-j), out of the total of 3,895. The original size (3,895) includes the 20 other English posts serving four other functions, introducing TEDx's backgrounds, this particular event's endorsers, MC and organising team. The 10 speaker introduction posts are especially analyzed in this study because they share the same function, namely introducing the 10 speakers, and they were produced entirely by a team of three university students, in the social media team. Besides, these 10 posts of speaker introduction are the majority out of the total of 30 posts, while the other 20 posts introduce four other units of the event, namely TEDx's backgrounds, this particular event's endorsers, MCs, and organising team. The 10 speaker introductions, therefore, are the one theme that stands with the most number of posts. It should also be noted that while each post consists of texts written in both Chinese and English together with their hashtags and emojis, this study analyzes only the written text in English, due to the limitation of this research scale.

Based on the researchers' personal interactions with TEDxEncompassHK's organizing team, the researchers learned that TEDxEncompassHK was exceptionally being oriented with a youthful and

down-to-earth approach, to stand itself out of the other three similar TEDxCountdown local events in town, happening within the same two weeks. As a result, Instagram is a fertile ground for this study because it is a social media application primarily used by and popular among the young population.

After gathering the 10 speaker introduction posts, the researchers proceeded to analyze the linguistic resources by using CDA, through the use of vocabulary, terms, and many other rhetorical strategies identified. This study aims to take a critical stance in examining the linguistic strategies deployed by the young Instagram authors in the construction of their identities that constitute their social responsibility and civic engagement.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the present study are organized based on the three emergent themes consistently located across the 10 IG posts studied, which respectively feature the 10 TEDx speakers for the event being promoted. Based on Fairclough's three-level textual analysis (1992), namely description, interpretation and explanation, this section first describes the linguistic strategies deployed by a group of young and active social media users, through interpreting their corresponding identities the strategies help create. Three major identities can be interpreted as the kinds of images as which the youth involved in this civic engagement would like the public to regard themselves.

The study will then proceed to the stage of explanation (Fairclough, 1992) in the discussion section.

4.1 Youthful and Playful

All 10 posts clearly target the youth audience. The linguistic resources found among all the posts collectively point to the assumption that they were written either by young people, or at least by authors intentionally adopting a youthful tone. A youthful tone, in this study, refers to the lighthearted and vibrant energy exemplified by linguistic strategies deployed to mimic how the young communicate themselves with each other, and with their readers on their own platform, namely the concerned Instagram account. For instance, all 10 posts featured imperative sentences beginning with a verb, such as "Let us bring you in-depth sights from Mr Lam Chiu Ying", "remember to join us at TEDxEncompassHK", "Stay tuned to her sharing at TEDxEncompassHK!", and "Want to know more about his story? Join our TEDx talk on 18 October. Instead of sounding like overbearing orders, the use of imperatives creates a different discursive rhythm similar to commonly found in youth texting culture, particularly given that the majority of sentences in a given post are written with a clear subject. The occasional use of imperatives in each post also reduces the formality of the tone, resulting in a conversational style.

The conversational style itself is also a consistent linguistic resource located in all 10 posts. The last line of each post typically includes second-person pronouns such as "you" and "your" to encourage readers to attend the promoted TEDx talk: "If you are interested in this topic, ...", "If you would like to get some insights, ...", "If you want to know more about Joanne, ..." and "See you on 18 October, 2 pm to 7 pm". Together with the use of conversational and exclamation phrases such as "Oh wait!!", "Hey stop for a while!!", "Yes, for sure!", "What's more!", and "Let's hear what he has to say..."; the use of second-person pronouns reduces the distance between authors and readers, making the posts more like conversational pieces rather than informative texts.

Conversing with readers, and even positioning the post authors themselves as being part of both the readership and the potential audienceship, is achieved by the authors' use of inclusive first-person plural pronouns such as "we" and "our": "he will also be sharing with us how we, as individuals, could help spread this mission to the world by developing social consciousness...", "Come join us to learn and explore more about this topic", "Join us on 18 October!" and "... hoping to inspire you to look at our fashion consumption habits from a different perspective." The young authors presented themselves as the organizers of the TEDx event, inviting members of the public to join them as part of the global initiative. More importantly, in sentences such as "how we, as individuals, could help spread this mission..." and "...look at our fashion consumption habits from a different perspective", the use of

first-person plural pronouns appears to position the post authors on an even bigger, more glorified platform, in which the young shoulder the social responsibility to address the global issue of the climate crisis.

Lastly, the youthful, even playful, identity that the young authors constructed for themselves is also evidenced in the intentional and unconventional ways in which the posts are punctuated, such as “Oh wait!!”, “Hey stop for a while!!”, and “Now she finally could figure out the way to save Mr Earth!!”. The frequent use of exclamation phrases represent traces of texting rituals that are commonly adopted in mobile networking applications, indicating the IG authors’ intention to highlight their young and vibrant personalities.

While the use of imperative, second-person pronouns, first-person pronouns, exclamation phrases, and unconventional use of exclamation marks are not exclusive to the youth, such linguistic strategies collectively demonstrate the youths’ desires to be identified as a group of versatile, social media-friendly people who are proud of their youth but also confident in communicating their socio-cultural and emotional sensitivity and knowledge to the world. This is similar to the concept of transcultural citizenship proposed by Shelat (2014). Transcultural citizenship refers to globally oriented citizens in the digital world, who are informed by their local experiences and lived realities while engaging with broader global audiences in global issues (Shelat, 2014). The local experiences and lived realities that the young IG authors draw on are reflected in the three major identities revealed through the findings of this study. The authors capitalize on, and even amplify, their youth through a range of linguistic strategies aiming to create a casual, conversational, text messaging-like vibe.

4.2 Knowledgeable

Throughout all ten of the speaker introduction posts, the young and vibrant TEDx organizers also constructed for themselves a knowledgeable identity, displaying their considerable knowledge about the speakers and how the speakers have contributed to the battle against the climate crisis in their individual capacities. In addition to the expected, needed information such as the speaker’s name, title, and current and former prominent affiliations, the IG authors enriched the introduction posts with the content of the speakers’ talks, and especially shed light on how each speaker could contribute to accelerating solutions to the climate crisis.

- “... to share with us what lessons we can draw from COVID-19 pandemic in response to the climate change” (Mark McGinley)
- “... to share with us how pollution is related to wardrobe, hoping to inspire you to look at our fashion consumption habits from a different perspective” (Ren Wan)
- “... He’s one of the most popular and loved professors in HKU! He can definitely give us other perspectives and ideas on how we can help save the marine life around us!” (David Baker)
- “You might have already seen it in eco-friendly shops and restaurants around the city. We are honored to have Devana to share with us her story, and how we all can reduce at source and through our daily actions, as little green steps, to make a difference!” (Devana)
- “Let’s hear what he has to say about bringing a second life to Hong Kong’s timber!” (Ricci Wong)
- “... he will also be sharing with us how we, as individuals, could help spread this mission to become changemakers. His talk will cover how he creates an inclusive environment for the students from 90 countries and generates 1.9 million from the scholarship programmes for its solar power system project, the largest of its kind in Hong Kong” (Arnett)

The introduction post for the youngest speaker at the TEDx event—Kamakshi Bhavnani, the 15-year-old founder of Youth Ocean Alliance, is notable because it is the only one, among the 10 speaker introduction posts, with the most coverage on her diverse credentials as an environmentalist, highlighting her involvement and capacities in at least 8 different organizations and projects. Moreover, the post was the only one in which the phrase “young people” explicitly appears, twice: “Kamakshi believes that young people can change the world and seeks every opportunity to inspire young people to believe in themselves and take action.”

The IG authors also detailed Dr Joanne Yeung's educational background ("After graduating from Stanford University...") and academic affiliations: "Upon her return to academia as a Research Assistant Professor in the University of Hong Kong, she led numerous international collaborations in projects...", "...has initiated interdisciplinary research projects, including...", and "...bringing experts from multiple disciplines and developing...". In two of the ten speaker introduction posts, the IG authors provided additional background knowledge from the speakers' respective lines of work, namely three ways to save the coral reef (David Baker) and the five most famous recycled materials (Ricci Wong).

The knowledgeable identity is being constructed by the young authors' showing their social media literacy in terms of synthesizing and creating meanings. In describing each TEDx speaker, the young authors exhibit all the dimensions of social media literacy considered in the NMLS developed by Koc and Barut (2016). First, the construction of the "knowledgeable" identity demonstrates their competencies in both functional consumption (being able to access media content and understand its meanings) and critical consumption (being able to analyze and interpret the meanings and consequences of media content). The young authors are also equipped with functional prosumption, being responsible for producing and sharing all of the IG posts.

4.3 Sentimental and Literate

Aside from portraying the young authors as youthful, playful, and knowledgeable, a range of literary devices were also being deployed to help build the authors' identities of being sentimental about the environment and other global issues, in addition to being literate.

Lyrics from "Imagine" by the legendary British band, The Beatles, were adapted, from the original lines "Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try" to "Imagine there's no black coal; it's easy if you try. Imagine Hong Kong's eco-friendly, not burning coal in the blue sky" to begin the first speaker introduction post and feature the speaker considered the most prominent in the lineup: Mr Lam Chiu-ying, former director of the Hong Kong Observatory.

This kind of romantic narrative also features in another speaker introduction post, beginning with "Once upon a time, there was a healthy planet called Earth with lots of happy friends" (Joanne Yeung). The post tells how as a child, the speaker Joanne was first inspired by "The Story of Mr Earth". The post then proceeds with different short paragraphs, led by the topic sentences "But some people started to spoil his look, and poison the sea...", "Poor Earth is very sick. Can he recover...? Yes, for sure!" and "Protect the environment; save the earth" respectively. Together, the paragraphs form a coherent story documenting how Joanne grew to be conscious of the damage being done to the Earth and how she became engaged in different job positions and projects in academia to address pressing environmental issues. In this narrative, Joanne is described as a superwoman curing and finally managing to save Mr Earth.

The recreation of the legendary lyrics and the references of events, stories and pop culture familiar to Hong Kong citizens can be understood as a conscious attempt of the young post authors to resonate with not only the local but also global readers. This could also share their heightened awareness of their exercising their social medial literacies to participate in an international engagement that impacts a worldly issue, namely climate change. Shelat's (2014) concept of transcultural citizenship is also applicable to the young authors in this study, given that they are building an online community, within the particular digital space of Instagram, in which they can express their concerns about the climate crisis.

The sentimental identity is also constituted through a personal level of sharing by the young authors. One of the speaker introduction posts begins as follows: "I have good news and bad news... The bad news is our environment and globe is deteriorating every day. But... the good news is- WE HAVE INVITED DR DAVID BAKER TO BECOME ONE OF OUR SPEAKERS!!" (David Baker). In the same post, an affectionate emotion is also conveyed: "He's one of the most popular and loved

professors in HKU!” Similarly, another post starts with: “How sustainable is your household? A lot of my friends are renovating their houses right now” (Ricci Wong). Introducing the speakers through such a poetic narrative approach displays the young authors’ intention of positioning themselves as storytellers, hoping to share and communicate with readers on a more personal, heartfelt level, instead of being merely informative and factual.

Other than this sentimental identity, the young authors also demonstrate their literate image and proficiency through writing using a variety of rhetorical devices. The repetition of sounds is observed in rhymes, such as “try” and “sky” in one post, and the use of alliteration in a number of posts, such as “burn” and “blue” in “burn coal in the blue sky” (Lam Chiu-ying). Puns also exhibit the linguistic efforts made the young authors in the IG posts: “We consider the monetary cost of buying the clothes, but do you also consider the cost to the earth?” (Ren Wan). The first instance of “cost” refers to the money needed to make a purchase, while the second refers to a sacrifice made.

Overall, the critical prosumption (Koc & Barut, 2016), the ability to produce media content, comprehend its social impact, and convey their personal values and beliefs while considering and negotiating others’ ideas, is especially reflected in the young authors playing an active role in addressing topics such as gender and age inequality, in addition to effecting the concerned changes. For example, in her speaker introduction post, Joanna Yeung is positioned as a “superwoman” (the word being stylized in all caps) coming to rescue Mr Earth. The explicit gendering of the two characters can be understood as a conscious move by the young authors to challenge existing gender stereotypes, given that femininity and masculinity are likely to still be misrepresented in social media (Chen et al., 2020), with females still being predominantly portrayed as nurturing, sentimental, and submissive to or dependent on males (Chen et al., 2020; LeBeau, 2020). Similarly, another female speaker, Devana, is similarly introduced as “one of the coolest eco-warriors in Hong Kong”. On the other hand, David Baker, a male speaker, is featured as “one of the most popular and loved professors in HKU”. These collectively could point the deliberate attempt the young IG authors in this study have made to challenge the stereotypical gender roles. They capitalize on the social media literacy where individuals are given the opportunity to develop their participatory abilities, especially by challenging the existing systems that lead to discrimination and social inequalities (Ranieri & Fabbro, 2016).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The description, interpretation and explanation of the Instagram posts written by a group of dedicated young social media users and writers demonstrate the multi-faceted linguistic strategies and the corresponding images they deployed and created respectively. The processes also point to their awareness of the social media literacies they equip themselves with. They are the digital population who actively and consciously produces, shares, and makes meanings through social media platforms. On top of deploying their existing social media literacies, this study, based on its findings and discussion, also hopes to facilitate the development of social media literacies through educational practices and research.

While incorporating the teaching of social media literacy into formal educational curricula is one way of developing it, to increase the authenticity of social media content and to encourage the creativity and critical thinking of young social media users, students should be encouraged to build their own social media literacies and competencies in experiential learning experience, learning to understand and identify quality and trustworthy sources or social media platforms for themselves (Gammon & White, 2011). Educators should also assess their own media literacy so that they can equip themselves for expanding students’ media competencies. Most importantly, instead of being instructed to access certain authorized media sources or to produce media content according to institutionalized rubrics, students should be taught that they are accountable for their every action on social media. While they have the right to perform functional and critical consumption, they are also responsible for functional and critical prosumption such that they bear social and civic responsibilities to themselves, their peers, and even the greater communities on social media of which they are members.

The concept of transcultural citizenship (Shelat, 2014) can be further explored in research to take advantage of the participatory and transformative power that social media spaces offer digital users for creating sociocultural communities without any boundary limitations (Jenkins, 2006). This study bears the limitation of not being able to engage with the young IG authors through qualitative interviews to learn about their motivations, experiences and commitment. This should point to a possible direction for future research to explore how social media can be manipulated as a vehicle for local, regional or even global civic engagement.

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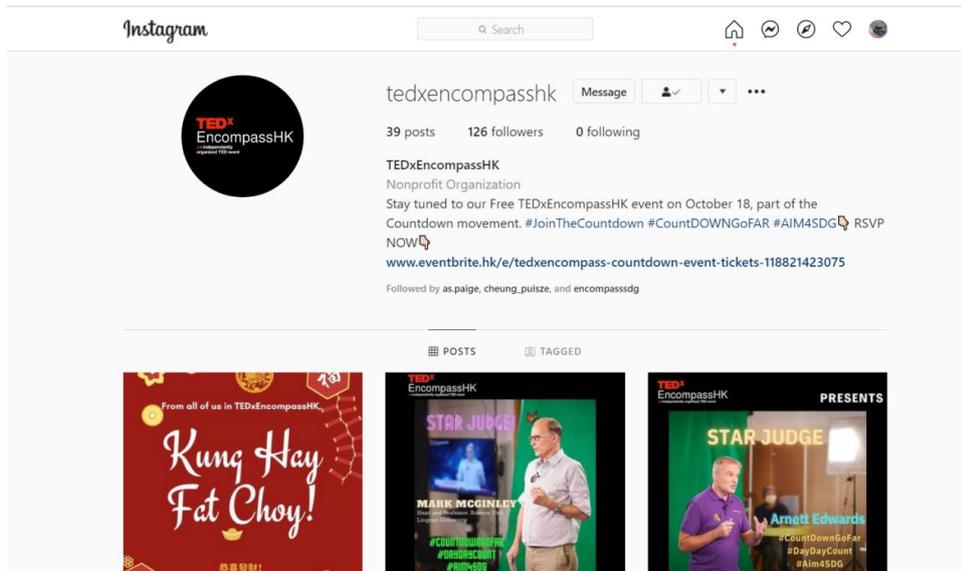
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Appendix

Appendix I. TEDxEncompassHK Instagram Homepage



Appendix II. TEDxEncompassHK List of Speakers



Appendix IIIa. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Lam Chiu Ying



tedxencompasshk • Following

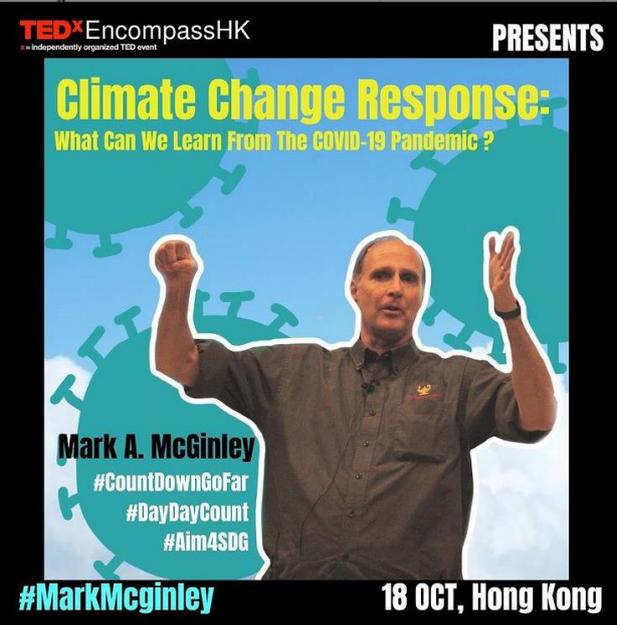
係咪林先生分享佢BBQ燒雞翼嘅故事呢？緊唔係啦！係分享一下佢點睇香港點先可以唔好咁傻係燒煤！🔥想知佢黎黎會講咩？一於睇實我地IG同埋 Facebook 啦！好料預埋你！

Imagine there's no black coal, it's easy if you try...
Imagine Hong Kong's eco-friendly, not burning coal on blue sky...
Let us bring you in-depth insights from Mr. Lam Chiu Ying!
TEDxEncompassHK is honoured to invite Mr. Lam Chiu Ying, the former Director at Hong Kong Observatory. Mr. Lam is going to deliver a talk about 'Imagine Hong Kong Not Burning Coal'. If you are interested in this topic, stay tuned to our Instagram and Facebook page!

11 likes
AUGUST 18, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix IIIb. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Mark A McGinley



tedxencompasshk • Following

多呢！係喇！個人蓋住，只冷灯以衣在歐洲咁呢！🌧️不過周圍多左好多膠罐... 錦鯉有咩高見啊？嶺南大學科學教研組主任Mark McGinley 黎緊會為我地 TedxEncompassHK 分享佢對新冠肺炎疫情如何為氣候行動帶來衝擊嘅辦法。想聽聽呢位生態學者真知灼見就咪走雞睇實我地IG 同埋Facebook page啦！🌟

While our normal life is disrupted by COVID-19, there is always a silver lining in the clouds. 🌈 Have you ever noticed our sky is much clearer than before? ☺️
Oh wait!! When you are looking up the blue sky, look down to the ground 🌍 You are surrounded by the PLASTIC WASTES 🗑️

We are glad to invite Mark McGinley, the Head and Director of the Science Unit from Lingnan University, to share with us what lessons we can draw

Liked by encompasssg and 11 others
AUGUST 22, 2020

Add a comment... Post

前往新冠病毒資訊中心。

Appendix IIIc. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Kamakshi Bhavnani



TEDxEncompassHK
Independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

Climate Action in HK

Kamakshi Bhavnani

#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#KamakshiBhavnani **18 OCT, Hong Kong**

tedxencompasshk • Following

話起當年即不係只日在...快啲好快...
想知道為保養海洋生態去到幾盡?一於
參加我地10月18日嘅
TedxEncompassHK啦! 🌊

Kamakshi Bhavnani is a 15 year old entrepreneur, environmentalist, award winning artist, Junior PADI certified diver, member of the Climate Action Hong Kong, Vice chairperson of Us for Planet, project coordinator for Hong Kong Ocean Youth and founder of Youth Ocean Alliance, an organisation focused on creating global network of young ocean ambassadors working on citizen science and conservation projects in order to conserve and protect our oceans. 🌊

Surely Kamakshi is a changemaker. She has worked on several social and environmental issues like diabetes

18 likes
AUGUST 27, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix III d. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Ren Wan



TEDxEncompassHK
Independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

12項關於你衣櫃的事實

REN WAN

#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#RenWan **18 OCT, Hong Kong**

tedxencompasshk • Following

About your wardrobe > turning to autumn, it is time to tidy up the wardrobe, and for sure to buy new clothes and throw the old clothes 🗑️

👉Hey stop a while!! We consider the monetary cost of buying the clothes, but do you also consider the cost to the earth? Do you know buying one clothe less can already save 20000 liters of water for the world? Do you know recycling a piece of garment can already reduce carbon emission? FASHION and ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY are highly related 🌱 We are glad to have Ren Wan, the co-founder of swap events organiser and sharing economy platform JupYeah, to share with us how pollution is related to wardrobe, hoping to inspire you to look at our fashion consumption habits from a different perspective 🙏

19 likes
SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix IIIg. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Devana Ng



TEDxEncompassHK
independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

環保
由打工開始!!
- Devana Ng

#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#DevanaNg
18 OCT, Hong Kong

tedxencompasshk • Following

and introduced the #INVISIBLEBAG, a biodegradable, water-soluble bag, as an alternative to single-use plastic bags. You might have already seen it in eco-friendly shops and restaurants around the city. 🍏🍏

We are honored to have Devana share with us her story, and how we all can reduce at source and through our daily actions, as little green steps, to make a difference! 🌱🌿
Want to learn more? JOIN US on 18 October! 🍏

📅 10月18日 下午2點至7點 約定你!
📍
<https://tedxencompasshk.eventbrite.hk/>
👁️ See you on 18th October, 2PM to 7PM! 🍏🍏

11 likes
OCTOBER 3, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix IIIh. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Ricci Wong



TEDxEncompassHK
independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

Bring A Second Life to Hong Kong Timber

Ricci Wong
#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#RicciWong
18 OCT, Hong Kong

tedxencompasshk • Following

environment? 🌿 In some cases, recycled materials can also make some homes stronger and efficient to build than new materials!! 🏡

5 of the most famous recycled materials are 🍏

1. Recycled Cork Panels and Flooring
2. Newspaperwood
3. Bark Siding
4. Recycled Glass Tile
5. Ashcrete

TEDxEncompassHK has invited Ricci as one of our guest speakers 🍏 and he is a famous ART-CHITECT in Hong Kong!! 🏡 Let's hear what he has to say about bringing a second life to Hong Kong's timber! 🌿 Come join us to learn and explore more about the topic 🍏🍏

11 likes
OCTOBER 5, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix IIIi. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Andrew Tsui



TEDxEncompassHK
= independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

食返靚個地球

Andrew Tsui

#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#AndrewTsui **18 OCT, Hong Kong**

tedxencompasshk • Following

左50個城市開置空間（共約5萬平方英尺），包括城市農場、室內園圃同農業科技項目等架啦~
想了解更多關於佢嘅故事？記得參加我地嘅TED Talk啦👉

In ancient time, there was the pastoral poet Tao Yuanming 🇨🇳, and today there is the expert of rooftop farming Mr. Andrew Tsui 🇮🇸

Andrew Tsui is the CEO and founder of the Rooftop Republic. He used to work for Singapore National Defense Forces and asset management. He saw that Hong Kong is similar to Singapore which both are highly urbanized and dependent on imported food, thus he is committed to promoting urban farming! 🌱🥕🥦

13 likes
OCTOBER 7, 2020

Add a comment... Post

Appendix IIIj. TEDxEncompassHK Speaker: Arnett Edwards



TEDxEncompassHK
= independently organized TED event

PRESENTS

From Mission to Action -
"A Force For Good"

Arnett Edwards

#CountDownGoFar
#DayDayCount
#Aim4SDG

#ArnettEdwards **18 OCT, Hong Kong**

tedxencompasshk • Following

Hey! 🤖 Guess who's our next guest for our coming TEDx event? It's Arnett!!!👉

Since August 2011, he has been working as the principal of Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong. 🇮🇸 He has a strong determination and passion for teaching leadership and management.👉 In the coming TEDx event, he will also be sharing with us how we, as individuals could help spread this mission to the world by developing social consciousness, commitment and becoming changemakers! 🌟 His talk will cover how he creates an inclusive environment for the students from 90 countries and generates 1.9 million from the scholarship programmes for its solar power system project 🌞 the

13 likes
OCTOBER 13, 2020

Add a comment... Post

About the Authors

Dr Holly Chung is the Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. Teaching English language at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, Holly is committed to promoting the fun of learning English by writing reference books, newspaper column, and hosting an educational television programme.

Dr Pui Ching Lam is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Early Childhood Education, the Education University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on educational leadership, play-based learning and professional development. Lam has worked in the United States where she held several positions in early childhood education field including Head Teacher, Curriculum Planner and Assistant Director.

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