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Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination on Social Networking Sites: The Case of YouTube

The introduction of the Web 2.0 has brought about a big change in content distribution, as a rigid separation between producer and public no longer exists (Bruns 2008). This also applies to the domain of science communication: whereas in the past it was mainly mainstream media that performed the task of sharing disseminating scientific knowledge to general audiences, now the latter can access this type of information on social networking sites, where professionally- (PGC) and user-generated content (UGC) are equally available. In spite of the fact that they can rely on fewer financial resources as well as on less formal technical training (Welbourne/Grant 2016), amateur users have proven able to raise the interest of lay people, thus becoming an important source of scientific information. The social media platform YouTube is a case in point: it hosts a number of science vlog channels, some of which can count on a remarkable follower base and are extremely popular.

Against this backdrop, this study sets out to investigate how famous science vloggers rhetorically build their online identity and, more specifically, the language and discursive strategies they adopt to create their YouTube persona. In order to reach this aim, an *ad hoc* corpus consisting of YouTube vlogs posted by scholars of scientific disciplines has been collected and the verbal component of these videos has been analyzed from a linguistic perspective. The theoretical framework chosen for this study is computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA), which arguably represents the most suited tool to examine language use as a social practice in digital environments (cf. Herring 1996; 2001). The approach of CMDA is combined with the use of automated interrogation routines where expedient for the purposes of this research, especially with a view to identifying recurrent syntactic patterns and lexical features.

References

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