A SHORT NOTE ON THE IMPACT OF SHORT-FORM CONTENT DOMINANCE ON ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT AND COGNITIVE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE

Leo Tolstoy's critique in "What is Art?" echoes contemporary concerns surrounding the homogenization of artistry in the realm of social media entertainment. This discussion unveils two critical repercussions stemming from the prevalence of short-form video content and algorithmic influence: the trivialization of artistic experiences and individual preferences due to repetitive exposure to mundane content, and the erosion of cognitive endurance, particularly noticeable among younger demographics, manifesting as reduced attention spans and tolerance thresholds.

Tolstoy's argument underscores the risk of artistic shallowness when divorced from universal appeal [1]:

"Becoming ever poorer and poorer in subject-matter and more and more unintelligible in form, the art of the upper classes, in its latest productions, has even lost all the characteristics of art, and has been replaced by imitations of art. Not only has upper-class art, in consequence of its separation from universal art, become poor in subject-matter and bad in form, i.e. ever more and more unintelligible, it has, in course of time, ceased even to be art at all, and has been replaced by counterfeits… It is said that the very best works of art are such that they cannot be understood by the mass, but are accessible only to the elect who are prepared to understand these great works. But if the majority of men do not understand, the knowledge necessary to enable them to understand should be taught and explained to them. But it turns out that there is no such knowledge, that the works cannot be explained, and that those who say the majority do not understand good works of art, still do not explain those works, but only tell us that, in order to understand them, one must read, and see, and hear these same works over and over again. But this is not to explain, it is only to habituate! And people may habituate themselves to anything, even to the very worst things. As people may habituate themselves to bad food, to spirits, tobacco, and opium, just in the same way they may habituate themselves to bad art—and that is exactly what is being done."

This observation resonates strikingly with contemporary social media trends. Platforms prioritize content tailored to individual preferences, leading to the creation and consumption of "ordinary content" fleeting entertainment lacking artistic merit or depth. As users habituate to such content, their exposure to and appreciation for more complex artistic expressions dwindles.

The algorithmic pursuit of maximizing viewership through micro-content compounds the issue of dwindling attention spans. Platforms incentivize content creators to inject initial seconds with novelty or shock value, exploiting the inherent "bottom-up" attention capture mechanism. Particularly vulnerable to this conditioning, young individuals risk impairing their ability to engage in sustained intellectual pursuits, detrimentally affecting their learning and critical thinking skills.

Beyond the aforementioned consequences, the environmental implications of this content-driven ecosystem warrant attention. The substantial resources required for producing, hosting, and consuming short-form videos significantly contribute to environmental degradation. Moreover, the relentless pursuit of virality and novelty fosters a culture of disposable content, demanding substantial material and energy resources.

Tolstoy's critique, initially rooted in concerns regarding cultural elitism, remains pertinent in the digital era. Social media content, designed for fleeting engagement rather than enduring impact, poses a risk of fostering audiences accustomed to low-engagement experiences. This poses adverse effects on individual preferences and cognitive resilience, culminating in a superficial and unsustainable entertainment landscape. Mitigating these concerns necessitates a multifaceted approach encompassing platform-level reforms emphasizing diverse and enriching content and educational endeavors fostering critical media literacy and responsible consumption habits. Reclaiming attention amidst algorithmic allurements is imperative in fostering a digital environment conducive to both cultural engagement and environmental sustainability.

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REFERENCES

[1] Tolstoy, L. (1897). What is Art? https://www.gutenberg.org/files/64908/64908-h/64908-h.htm