towards a post-pandemic world

REDISCOVERING THE POWER OF MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE

gCON 2021

CNM Graduate Students Conference
17 September 2021 | Fully virtual sessions

NUS
National University of Singapore

Department of Communications and New Media
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

a word from the organizers

Welcome to gCON 2021!

Every year, graduate students of the Department of Communications and New Media (CNM) are given the opportunity to organize the annual Graduate Students Conference (gCON 2021). It provides a platform for our fellow research students to present their research topics and works in progress. More importantly, it enables a safe space for them to discuss ideas that would hopefully improve their research as well as create a productive avenue to build networks with the rest of the student research community.

Seeing the cataclysmic impacts of COVID-19 in every fabric of society, gCON 2021's theme, 'Towards a Post-Pandemic World: Rediscovering The Power of Media, Technology and Culture' explores reimaginations of a post-pandemic world through academic and industry perspectives. We are graced by the presence of our esteemed keynote speakers, Dr. Yuhyun Park and Prof. Robin Jeffrey, whose expertise and oeuvre offer meaningful and complex insights on the power and possibilities of new media and technology as the world find innovative solutions that would hopefully make impacts in the community.

As the third gCON organizing team, we had a lot of fun bringing this conference together. We are extremely grateful to the Head of Department, Prof. Audrey Yue; our advisers Prof. Jack Qiu, Senior Lecturer Natalie Pang, Asst. Prof. Renyi Hong; our graduate student coordinator Assoc. Prof. Weiyu Zhang; and the CNM Admin team for their constant feedback, encouragement, support, and guidance throughout the entire process. We are also thankful to our graduate research student presenters and participants for gracing the event. Your enthusiasm and wit have made this conference engaging, meaningful, and successful. We hope you are as excited as we are for gCON 2021. We are looking forward to seeing you at the conference.

The organizing team,

Purnima, Francis, Samseer, Yuanyuan, Zishan, Qiaofei

gCON 2021
Programme Schedule

9:00 am Welcome Address, Prof. Audrey Yue

9:15 am Keynote Address
Dr. Yuhyun Park DQ Institute
Question & Answer

10:15 am Break

Panel 1
Chair: Zishan Lai

10:30 am Care for Muslim Women Representation against Algorithmic Automation
Nurul Huda Rashid NUS, CNM

10:45 am Young Women's Attitudes toward Beauty Apps
Xinyuan Luo NUS, CNM

11:00 am Unreliable Narration in Games: Making Sense of Antimimetic Narrative Logics
Roe Curie NUS, CNM

11:15 am Selling Intimacy One Gacha at a Time: A Survey of Monetization Systems in 20 Mobile Otome Games
Stanley Wijaya NUS, CNM

11:30 am The Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritages in the Digital Age
Anna Tang NUS, CNM | Nanjing University

11:45 am Question & Answer

12:05 pm Lunch Break

gCON 2021
Programme Schedule

12:55 pm Announcements

1:00 pm Introduction of Keynote Speaker and Moderator, Prof. Taberez Neyazi
Keynote Address
Prof. Robin Jeffrey NUS
Question & Answer

2:00 pm Break

Panel 2
Chair: Purnima Kamath

2:15 pm The Platformization of Cultural Production in a Post-socialist Chinese Village
Gao Xueying NUS, CNM

2:30 pm God helps those who help themselves: The moral economy and compassionate discourse of Chinese livestreaming sales
Yue Cao NUS, CNM | Fudan University

2:45 pm Between global and personal concerns: Participating and organizing mechanisms of consumer activism from a politicized angle
Chen Zhuo NUS, CNM

3:00 pm Tensions of Climate Change Discourse Between China and the United States: Comparative Social Network Analysis on Weibo and Twitter
Yifei Wang NUS, CNM

3:15 pm Question & Answer

3:30 pm Break

gCON 2021
Programme Schedule

Panel 3
Chair: Samseer Mambra

3:45 pm Media framing effect on Facebook engagement: Nationalism and political polarization in Korea-Japan trade dispute 2019
Jamie Sookyung Cho NUS, CNM

4:00 pm Media reliance for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Trust in Science and Misunderstanding of COVID-19
Yuanyuan Wu NUS, CNM

4:15 pm Media Representation of the Monarch in Malaysia: Political Contest of the Johor Royalty after General Election of 2013
Liaw Pey Wen NUS, Department of Malay Studies

4:30 pm Muslim aesthetics and voices on screen: an analysis of contemporary Islamic cinema in Indonesia
Najwa Abdullah NUS, CNM

4:45 pm Locating the 'culture' in 'cancel culture': sociopolitical public discourse in Singapore
Paul Jerusalem NUS, CNM

5:00 pm Question & Answer

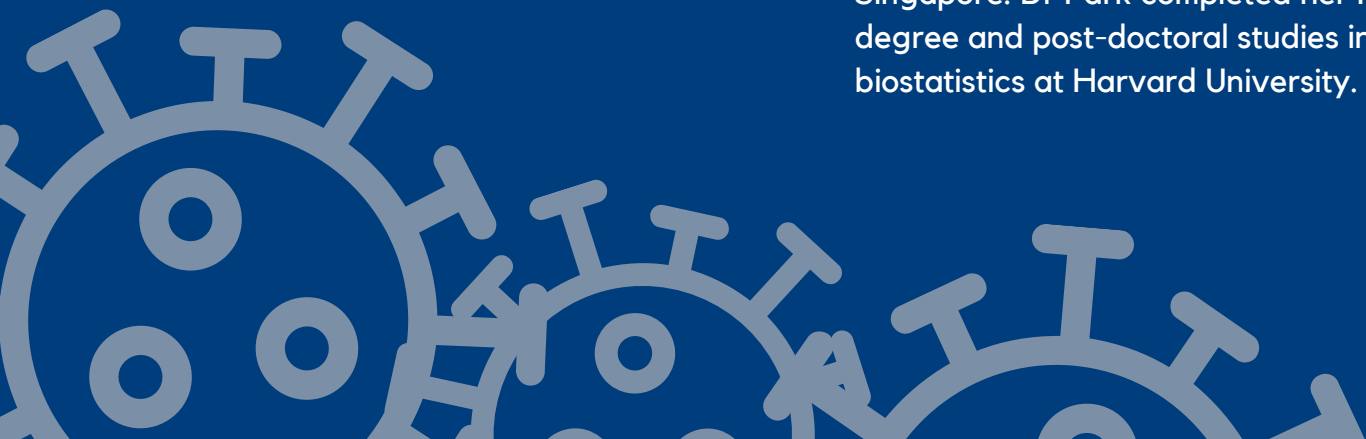**5:20 pm** Closing and Wrap-up, Prof. Weiyu Zhang

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Yuhyun Park

Dr. Yuhyun Park is a world-leading expert in digital skills and child online safety. She created the Digital Intelligence (DQ) concept and framework, which is the world's first global standards and a common framework for digital literacy, skills, and readiness (IEEE 3527.1) which was endorsed by the IEEE Standards Association, OECD, and World Economic Forum in 2018. Dr. Park developed the Child Online Safety Index, the world's first real-time metric tracker to help nations understand their children's online safety status, and leads the #DQEveryChild initiative, a global digital citizenship movement for children.

In addition, she has been serving in various international leadership positions related to digital economy, skills, and safety, including as the leader of the EQUALS ITU Digital Skills Coalition, the chair of TikTok Safety Advisory Council AP, and International Lead for Digital Economy in the G20 Civil Society (2020). She also serves as an adjunct professor at Yonsei University and a board member at Future Consensus institute in South Korea.

She has received several international awards, including recognition as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, Ashoka Fellow, Eisenhower Fellow, and multiple UNESCO prizes. She co-authored the "Dictionary for Economics", which is the most widely used dictionary for economics in Korea. Her academic experiences include serving as an adjunct professor at Yonsei University in Korea and as a director at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Dr Park completed her Ph.D. degree and post-doctoral studies in biostatistics at Harvard University.

Keynote Speaker

Prof. Robin Jeffrey

Professor Robin Jeffrey is a visiting research professor at the Institute of South Asian Studies, based at the National University of Singapore, since 2009. He is the author of India's Newspaper Revolution (2000 and later editions). His primary research interest is the modern history and politics of India, especially with reference the northern area of Punjab and Kerala in the south. He is also interested in Indian media studies and development studies.

Professor Jeffrey has published, with his colleague Assa Doron, Waste of a Nation: Garbage and Growth in India (Harvard University Press, 2018). He and Doron also co-authored The Great Indian Phone Book (London: C. Hurst/New York: Harvard University Press, 2013), which was published in India by Hachette under the title of Cell Phone Nation.

He has also co-edited with Ronojoy Sen and Pratima Singh, More than Maoism: Politics, Policies and Insurgencies in South Asia (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), and co-edited with Ronojoy Sen, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Media at Work in China and India (New Delhi: SAGE, 2015).

He has written about Kerala, Punjab and Indian media. A third edition of India's Newspaper Revolution was published in 2010, and The Decline of Nair Dominance, first published in 1976, remains in print. He contributes to ISAS policy papers and reports. He first lived in India as a school teacher in Chandigarh from 1967 to 1969 and has spent six years in India between 1967 and 2019. He completed a doctorate in Indian history at Sussex University in the United Kingdom in 1973, taught for 25 years in the Politics Program at La Trobe University in Melbourne, and worked twice at the Australian National University in Canberra.
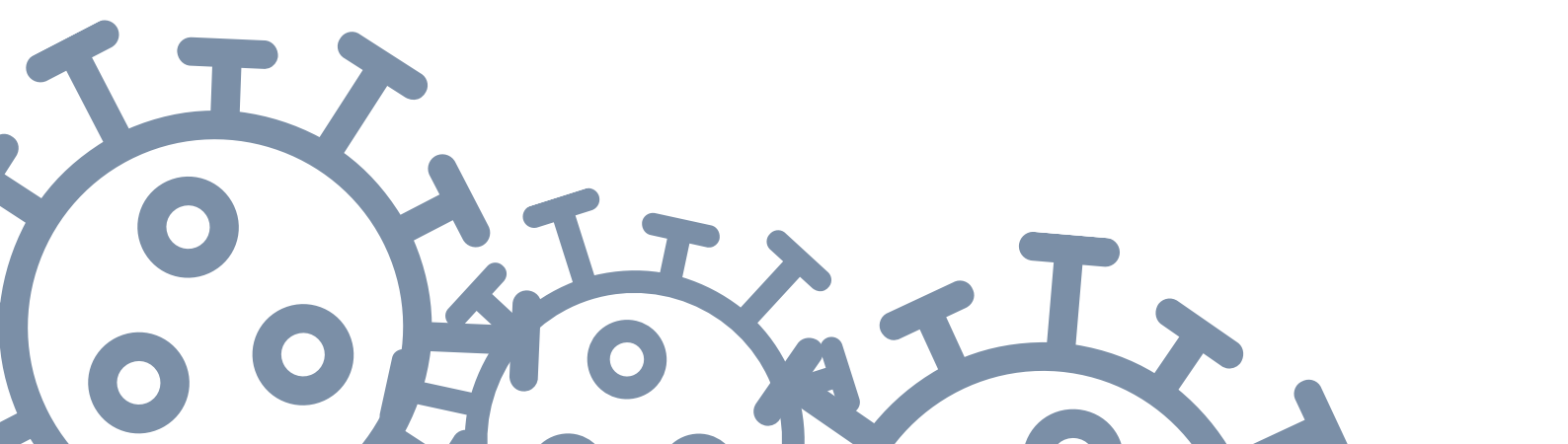
gCON 2021
Conference Theme

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic last year has forced a surge in the use of digital technologies, which changed the way we study, work, and play. The reconfiguration of our social practices speeds up the digital transformation of our society. Additionally, the flourishing media and technology consumption during the pandemic continues to significantly affect our everyday culture. As a result, we live in a reality where the differences between the physical and the digital are blurred. Against the backdrop of this inevitable relationship between humans and digital technologies, many social issues have been discussed: the unequal access to digital media and technology intensified social inequalities; the mandatory contact-tracing apps raised debates over data privacy and agency; the infodemic exacerbated the crisis of social trust and cyber-nationalism; the extensive use of media platforms and applications affected our wellbeing. All these events reveal the vital and ubiquitous role of media, technology, and culture in today's tumultuous time.

In light of these discussions, this year's CNM Graduate Students Conference (gCON 2021) will be hosting keynotes on rediscovering the power of media, technology and culture in a post-pandemic world. The two keynote addresses will explore these topics from academic and industry perspectives in the hopes of elaborating theoretical and practical approaches that we can hopefully adopt as we tackle these inquiries.
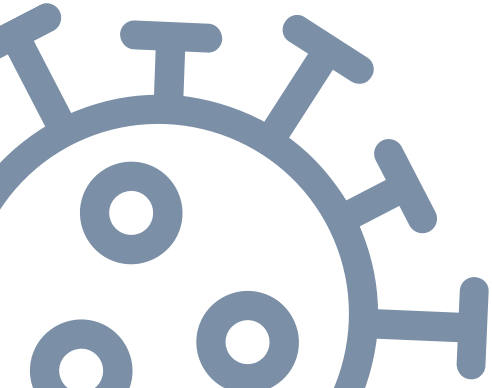
Care for Muslim Women Representation against Algorithmic Automation

Nurul Huda Rashid

National University of Singapore

Nurul Huda Rashid (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies in Asia programme. Her dissertation explores the role of algorithms as a tool in the study of Muslim women images in the data turn. Prior to re-joining academia, Nurul articulated this research as a visual arts project, 'Women in War', where she explored the role of annotation as counter-visual and counter-data strategies to the singular representation of images in search engines. She aims to incorporate art-as-practice in her participatory action research with Muslim women communities during her fieldwork. Nurul loves cats and hopes to adopt one someday.

This paper aims to discuss the changing contexts and 'ways of seeing' in the study of images of Muslim women. Muslim women images have been shaped by historical colonialism alongside the ideological imagination of Orientalism that imprinted Muslim women into tropes of the odalisque in the harem. This Oriental gaze was captured through the imperial role of the daguerreotype camera and facilitated through the mass reproduction and dissemination of the image into colonial postcards for the consumption of the Western world. The shift into cinema and news media further illuminated tropes of the exotic as a spectacle of the Arab world, reifying the Orientalist gaze that is embedded in the symbol of the hijab (veil). The exotic is however altered in the post-9/11 world when images of Muslim women were depicted as dangerous or insecure, articulated through narratives of security and surveillance, or in need of saving. These eurocentric perspectives are later challenged in the digital age of social media where #MuslimWomen becomes a source of self-representation for Muslim women: to own their own subjectivities and images through fashion and entrepreneurship, and activism. Recent scholarship on AI and data studies have identified a new context for the study of Muslim women images, shaped through attention on image-making technologies beyond the camera as a way of seeing. This paper aims to identity the role of the algorithm as a new site of reproduction and circulation of Muslim women images through the concepts of visuality and countervisuality.

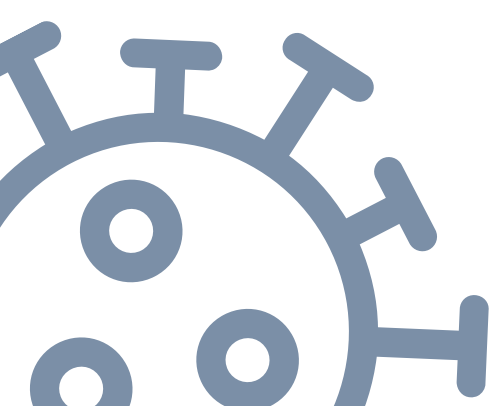# Young Women's Attitudes toward Beauty Apps

Xinyuan Luo

National University of Singapore

Hi, I'm Xinyuan Luo. I come from Shanghai, China. I graduated from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and achieved a bachelor's degree in Communication and Media. Currently, I am a master student in the Department of Communication and New Media at the National University of Singapore. My research interest is about health communication, social media and online well-being, gender and society.

When the world's first photo-editing Software, Adobe Photoshop, was released in 1987, people entered a new era of photo-editing. And when the world experience the blessings brought by technology development, beauty apps, the popular self-editing tools, have changed the ways of life of billions of people.

Beauty apps offer instant beautification: airbrushing skin, enlarging eyes, whitening teeth, and even changing body size. One more click, and the photos retouched could be shared onto social media sites. Easy to use, beautification apps have found their way into hundreds of millions of cellphones and tablets--everyone now has the chance, as well as the means, to look like his or her ideal self. Despite the popularity of beauty apps, many people have raised concerns about how the usage of beauty apps may impact women's construction of self-image and psychological well-beings. This research is aimed at 1) learning a series of behaviors, ranging from taking selfies, selecting pictures, editing, and posting, and 2) investigating the role of social media play in those behaviors. 3) examining women's attitudes towards beauty apps. Specifically, how the usage of beauty apps and the dynamics between social media and beauty apps will change women's lives. This study will apply exploratory sequential design which involves two phases: qualitative phase (open-needed question) and quantitative phase (close-ended question). A joint display can be used to integrate two strands of data through visual presentation of synthesis that demonstrates a connection between behavior characteristics (qualitative) and scale scores (quantitative).
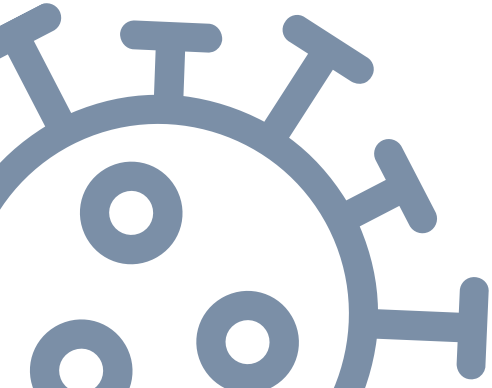
Unreliable Narration in Games: Making Sense of Antimimetic Narrative Logics

Roe Curie

National University of Singapore

Roe Curie is a final-year Master's student at the Department of Communications and New Media. Her research interests lie in the ludonarrative space - particularly in the area of unreliable narration in video games, and what it is about the storytelling medium of games that make unreliable narration an unnatural experience for the player.

In narratives with antimimetic unreliability, we are faced with a possible tension between the author's artistic intent and the reader's need for reliable information. While both unreliable and unnatural antimimetic narration have been discussed in the context of other narrative mediums, these phenomena have not been closely examined in video games. Through close readings of Orwell and OneShot, we explore what it is about unreliability in the medium of video games that make the player experience unnatural – more so than in other mediums – and why players continue to engage with these games despite experiencing antimimesis. Our findings suggest that knowledge of the presence of antimimetic narrative logics coupled with successful mental transitions using appropriate reading strategies motivates players to continue committing to the game de-spite the unreliability of the narrative logics. To begin to explain this, we propose the concept of Trust – a higher level trust that can override the feelings of distrust in moment-to-moment gameplay.

Selling Intimacy One Gacha at a Time: A Survey of Monetization Systems in 20 Mobile Otome Games
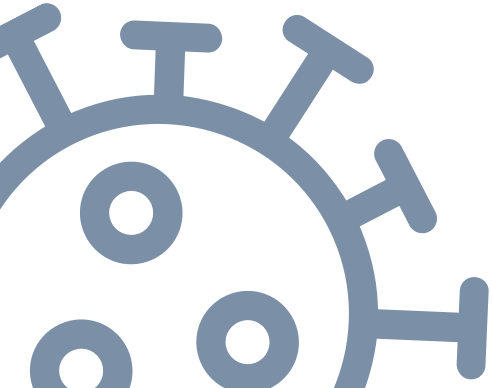
Stanley Wijaya

National University of Singapore

Stanley Arvan Wijaya is a Year 2 Communications and New Media Masters student at National University of Singapore. His research focuses on the emergence of Visual Novel from a culturally specific Japanese medium to its current international form, utilizing both cultural studies and platform studies approaches to uncover this history. His Undergraduate Honours Thesis examined how Steam, a western game marketplace platform, influenced the growth and development of Visual Novels as a genre in the west.

Otome games or female-oriented dating simulation games offer an alternate space within gaming, targeting the historically overlooked female gaming market. Following recent gaming trends, the genre has increasingly moved onto the mobile gaming market, and with that migration comes changes in the game's form and structure as well. While previous research has focused on individual game titles, a broader survey of the mobile Otome games landscape has yet to be conducted.

This paper aims to complement existing examinations of Otome games through a survey of 20 mobile Otome games titles on the iOS platform. The paper focuses on two aspects of these games: the monetization strategies implemented and the systems of play encouraged.

By comparing the ways mobile Otome games monetize and structure themselves, in relation to other non-Otome mobile games, this study aims to contextualize the changes seen in mobile Otome games as part of a larger trend of exploitative design within the mobile gaming market.

Panel 1
Presentation

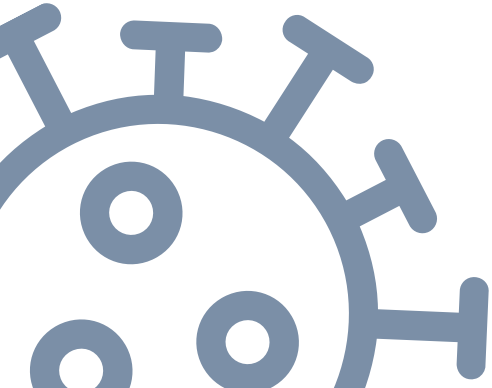# The Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritages in the Digital Age

Anna Tang

National University of Singapore
Nanjing University

Jinyu Tang is a PhD candidate in the School of Information Management at Nanjing University. She currently is a visiting research student in CNM, NUS. Her research focuses on digital intangible cultural heritage preservation and public culture service.

Although people are aware that taking advantage of advanced technologies is a promising way of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritages (ICH), the digital ICH platforms built for visual presentation and interaction are either not much different from those of material heritages, or just for entertainment, which obviously could make a limited contribution to the ICH inheritance in the public. Therefore, it is essential to figure out the factors that affect the transmission of ICH in digital means.

The on-going research would be firstly conducted by semi-structured interviews to explore the factors that influence the acceptance and effectiveness of the digital ICH platforms and services in the public, which would be used to propose hypotheses. Then, by constructing a model based on the technology acceptance model, attention-interest-desire-memory-action model, and experiential learning theory, the factors that facilitate and hinder the transmission of ICH knowledge and skills in digital ways could be investigated theoretically. At the second stage, a questionnaire will be designed to collect people's ideas about transmitting and learning ICH in digital ways and their experience about current ICH products and research platforms. The collected data would be used to validate the hypothesized model. As for the sampling for the data collection, purposive sampling would be applied.

Hopefully, the research could identify the factors that influence the effectiveness and efficiency of those digital platforms, which may provide useful suggestion for the practical implementation in the future.
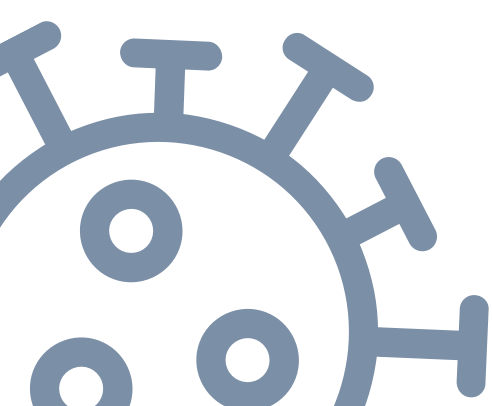
Panel 2
Presentation

The Platformization of Cultural Production in a Post-socialist Chinese Village

Gao Xueying

National University of Singapore

Xueying is a Ph.D. candidate in the program of Cultural Studies in Asia. Her thesis is on popular cultural production and representations of rural China in the national policy context of "village revitalization" with a particular interest in how is rural cultural subjectivity conditioned by the dynamic power relations in post-socialist China.

With increased internet access and more affordable smartphones, China is gradually closing the digital divide between the rural and urban regions in some respects. This research explores the platformization of cultural production in rural China in the policy context of village revitalization and poverty reduction. In the spring of 2020, Cunguan Xiaoshu, a college-graduate village official in Huichuan, Gansu Province, became popular on the short-video platforms for selling pigs through online streaming. With his help, the villagers sold a total of over 2600 pigs that were overstocking due to the close-down of the livestock markets during the pandemic. What is behind this is cooperation between the local government and a multi-channel network (MCN) to train the villagers into internet celebrities for better publication of the villages and the prosperity of e-commerce. In comparison with the commercial success of Li Ziqi, a world popular internet celebrity who produces knowledge about rural China, this research brings in the case of Xiaoshu and other local content-producers to unfold the complexity of cultural politics between the State, rural residents, MCN and the local internet celebrities in the State's effort to reduce poverty and revitalize the countryside through digital platforms. It is proposed that the local content producers' resistance to platform economy reveal characteristics of the post-socialist rural China.

God helps those who help themselves: The moral economy and compassionate discourse of Chinese livestreaming sales
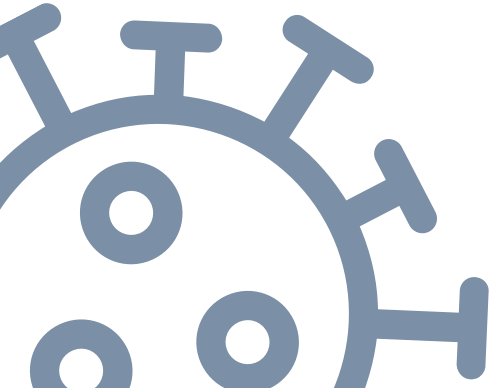
Yue Cao

National University of Singapore
Fudan University

My name is Cao Yue, you can also call me "Nick". I am a PhD candidate in School of Journalism, Fudan University, as well as a Research Exchange Student in NUS, CNM. My research interests include celebrity studies, platform studies, culture studies and urban communication. I am doing my PhD dissertation that mainly talks about the moral economy of short-video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, and explores how strangers will interact and reshape their social relationships.

The COVID-19 pandemic shocks the traditional real economy, rising new livelihood issues, and also let the gig economy permeate all walks of society. In contemporary China, the popularity of livestreaming sales has been regarded as one of the keys to the national economic recovery. Meanwhile, it sparks great social controversy since increasing anchors choose to perform their private suffering to gain public compassion and selling commodities, which implies the norms of compassion might be dramatically negotiated under the environment of digital platforms. In contrast to the existing studies with narratives like marketing or critical sociology, this paper adopts the moral economy approach to reveal the porosity of livestreaming sales. Specifically, it tries to explore how the "double movement" is constituted between economic activity and moral norms.

Through 5 months of digital ethnography, I followed the media life stories of 6 anchors, with depth interviews and context analysis as well. The research finds that: (1) From the disadvantaged anchors' view, the livestreaming sales is regarded as a special economy based on the "survival ethics", which can only help sustain livelihoods, rather than make a fortune. However, it is the cost that their miserable life stories would be exposed to unforeseen audiences inevitably. In addition, they are likely to get caught up in online bullying, hate speech and trolling. (2) As for the audience or consumers, they treat their shopping as good deeds in the name of individual, and pose certain moral expectations on the anchors' performance that it needs to be inspirational. (3) The platform seems to be the biggest winner not only because of its high tax from e-commerce and virtual gifts, but also the successful anchors will be packaged as proof of corporate social responsibility, bringing extensive social benefits. In sum, it concludes that the digital platform may filter the accountability at the level of social structure and reinforce the individualistic ethic of compassion in contemporary China.

Panel 2
Presentation

Between global and personal concerns: Participating and organizing mechanisms of consumer activism from a politicized angle
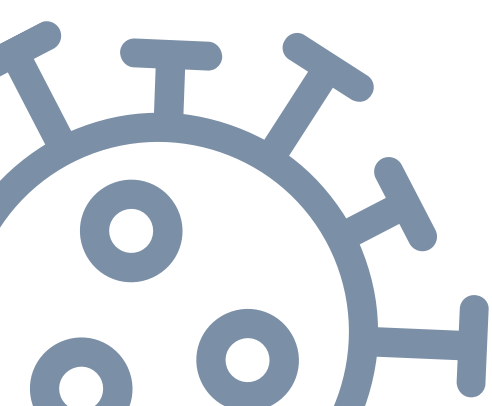
Chen Zhuo

National University of Singapore

Zhuo Chen is a PhD candidate at the Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore. His research interests include activism, civic engagement, public opinion, and collective efforts in general, with a particular focus on the role of media tech. He has published articles in Social Media + Society, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Telematics and Informatics, Public Relations Review, and Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking.

This research focuses on the trend of personalization of politics, which posits that, against the backdrop of deindustrialization and individualization in the advanced democracies, participation in collective action is increasingly driven by personal values rather than collective blueprints as well as organized in a decentralized manner instead of an institutional way. To study this phenomenon, this research directs attention to an emerging type of consumer activism and conceptualizes it as politicized consumer activism.

To understand the reason why politicized consumers take part in protest and whether it manifests the logic of personalization of politics, this research uses the 2020 Facebook ad boycott campaign as a case to study its organizing mechanism. To do so, a study was conducted to test the respective impacts of topological structures and action frames on prompting others to join the online protest (i.e., mobilization). More than 100, 000 Twitter posts, along with the account information and following relations of their creators, were collected. The study used triadic closure to measure the clusteredness of the actors' community structure, implemented structural topic modeling to analyze the text and further classified them into personal and collective action frames. The negative binomial regression found that tightly knitted community structure and personal action frames are more likely to prompt others to retweet. Theoretical implications of the findings and directions for future research were discussed.

Panel 2
Presentation

Tensions of Climate Change Discourse Between China and the United States: Comparative Social Network Analysis on Weibo and Twitter

Yifei Wang

National University of Singapore

First-year master's student at CNM, interested in political communication, social psychology, and the relationship between public opinion and policy-making.

Climate change is not only a natural risk but also a social discourse that involves multiple politico-economic factors. This study adopts a discursive perspective in examining how climate change is debated and portrayed in the two largest carbon emitters on the earth: China and the United States. When the climate change discourse transformed from the scientific field into the social field, it relates to power relationships, both domestically and internationally. In the US, climate change discourse is bottom-up, partisanly divided, and adaptive, but it is top-down, elitist, nationalist, and colonial in China. Through analyzing the representative social media platforms of Twitter and Weibo, the study analyzes the subject (who), content (what), and source (why) of the climate change discourse in China and the US. Accordingly, the research adopts network analysis to identify the key agents, framing analysis to discern various narratives, and emotional analysis to understand the role of temporal perspectives in driving the discourse. This study puts climate change as a social and geopolitical issue and develops the application of discourse analysis in quantitative research.

Panel 3
Presentation

Media framing effect on Facebook engagement: Nationalism and political polarization in Korea-Japan trade dispute 2019

Jamie Sookyung Cho

National University of Singapore

Jamie Sookyung Cho is a final-year masters' student in the Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore. Before studying in NUS, she worked in an Asia-Pacific advocacy network in nuclear non-proliferation and a foundation for Northeast Asian relations as program officer. She has double BAs in international studies and public administration at Korea University. Her thesis focuses on framing effect on Facebook and the tension between nationalism and political polarization on the Korea-Japan trade dispute in 2019.

While framing and framing effect studies have been conducted for a long time across various issues, time, and country, it is less clear how the concepts work in the social media context. Based on a framework of three media logics and anti-Japanism, this paper examines media framing effects on Facebook regarding the Korea-Japan trade dispute in 2019 through quantitative content analysis and statistical tests such as principal component analysis. Specifically, this paper explores the portrayal of the Korean government in newspapers and Facebook comments, the relationship between media and audience frames, and the manifestation of media logic in Facebook features.

The trade dispute is embedded in a long history of nationalistic sentiments in Korea from failed decolonization efforts. Accordingly, findings suggest that even the politically polarized Korean media has largely towed the typical line of nationalism in covering Korea-Japan relations. However, findings on legacy media's use of Facebook features such as status messages suggest the salience of inherent political logic on social media. Furthermore, in contrast to the overall nationalistic media coverage of the issue, the audience in Facebook have focused on domestic political contestation. It suggests a synergy effect of legacy media and the audience on Facebook – the interplay between political logic and commercial logic in legacy media and political polarization in the audience. The paper contributes to empirical investigation of not only framing effect of Korea-Japan relations, but also the framing effect on audience construction of social reality on Facebook.
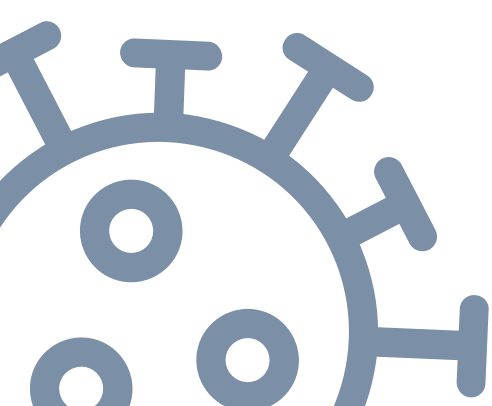
Panel 3
Presentation

Media reliance for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Trust in Science and Misunderstanding of COVID-19

Yuanyuan Wu

National University of Singapore

Yuanyuan Wu is a first year PhD student at the Department of Communications and New Media. Her research interest is primarily risk and health communication and public understanding of risk. Before joining NUS, she worked at China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) as a product operation executive in Beijing, China.

Despite over one year effort from scientists around the world to work together on the medical treatment of COVID-19, no effective treatment has been proved without contradictory results and widely used on patients. While scientific research about coronavirus treatment drugs aiming to provide robust and evidence-based results is underway, some counties such as Thailand, Indonesia, India and China also turn to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) including traditional and herbal medicine in treatment of COVID-19. Therefore, it would be possible that lay people follow these instructions and turn to CAM during the pandemic and search for more related information from the Internet. However, the investigation of online media that disseminate CAM-related information is largely undeveloped. It is unclear what impact that consuming CAM information from online digital media would have on people's misunderstanding of COVID-19. Also, decades of studies have lent credence to the role trust plays in moderating communication effects on beliefs and perception, but the moderating role of trust in science and medical authorities, as an important factor in influencing beliefs about health and science related issues, has not been fully explored. What adds more complexity to this question is how people understand CAM. The meaning of trust in science and medical authorities would be different if people have different understanding of whether CAM is supported by scientific evidence. Thus, this research aims to explore the relationship between obtaining CAM from different digital media and people's beliefs in COVID-19 conspiracy theory and misinformation. Also, a more thorough examination of the moderating role of trust in science and medical authorities will be conducted.
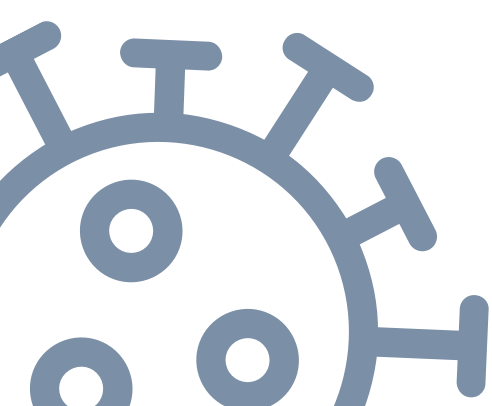
Panel 3
Presentation

Media Representation of the Monarch in Malaysia: Political Contest of the Johor Royalty after General Election of 2013

Liaw Pey Wen

National University of Singapore

Liaw Pey Wen is a first year PhD student at the Department of Malay Studies.

The aim of this PhD project is to study into media-monarch relations in the post-GE13 era under the constitutional monarchy political structure. The phenomenon that this study wants to explain is how Johor Sultan effectively utilize the social media to retain legitimacy. This study aims to go beyond the political and constitutional power of monarchy. It looks into two areas: (1) media representation and political discourse of Johor Royalty in the perspectives of political communication; and (2) to figure out the dynamic relationship between social media and Royalty political power in the framework of political contest model with the Royalty's intention to offer political discourse.

Panel 3
Presentation

Muslim aesthetics and voices on screen: an analysis of contemporary Islamic cinema in Indonesia

Najwa Abdullah

National University of Singapore

Najwa Abdullah is currently a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies in Asia at the Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore. She holds an MA in Critical Media and Cultural Studies from SOAS, University of London, and BA in English Literature from Universitas Indonesia. Her research interests include history of communications, popular culture, critical theory, and postcolonial thought. Her PhD research focuses on the technological and meaning-making processes transpiring in contemporary Islamic cinema in Indonesia.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Indonesia has seen an increased investment in religious piety, manifesting in the proliferation of Islam-focused goods, services, and media products. As such, there has been an obvious trend to engage Islam in the cultural and creative sector, whereby the new Muslim middle-class generation brings in their religious knowledge into popular arts and culture scene. This project seeks to understand such aspect of contemporary Muslim life in Indonesia through a qualitative study of its popular culture, with a particular focus on the film industry. Combining theoretical perspectives from media ecology, postcolonial thought, and critical theory, it aims to analyse novel-based Indonesian films parked under the Islamic genre and produced between year 2003 and present, by understanding the film form (e.g. techniques, aesthetic features), deciphering its content (e.g. narrative structures and meanings), and identifying the contexts within which the films are produced. As such, this research asks: How do Indonesian Muslim filmmakers and writers use modern media such as print, film, and the Internet to communicate their views on Islam and modernity? How does such engagement give rise to the emergence of the Islamic film genre? In the process, how do the technological and historical contexts of film technology and institutions influence the content of the selected films? What do the films say about being Muslim in a modernising world? Therefore, in addition to offering new ways of thinking about cultural representations in the selected films through the lens of postcolonial and social criticism, this research takes into serious consideration the historical contexts of the rise of modern communication technologies, especially film, in the region and its effects on Islamic arts and knowledge production.
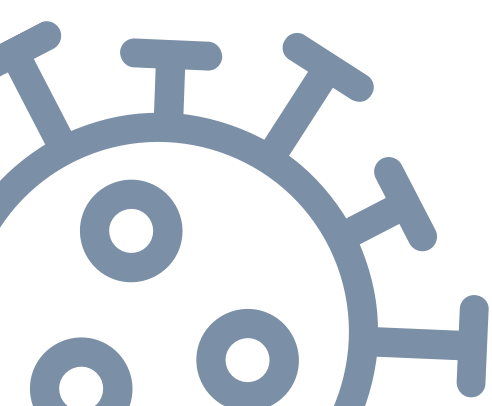
Locating the 'culture' in 'cancel culture': sociopolitical public discourse in Singapore

Paul Jerusalem

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Paul Jerusalem (he/him) is a second-year Master's candidate with the Communications and New Media department at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Having graduated from Yale-NUS as a Literature major and spent a year in public relations, his research interests include queer studies, migration studies, cultural critique, and pop culture.

In this work-in-progress, I study the meanings and implications that the notion of 'cancel culture' holds in Singapore. With the concept having seen a massive rise in usage and currency in the past year, it bears questioning overlaps and points of departure the usage of the term as such has in Singapore, as compared with its usage in other parts of the world. While most observers are divided on the specificities in defining the term, my aim here is not to demarcate the boundaries between what constitutes 'cancellation' or 'cancel culture'. Rather, I attend to the aspect of the term that is rarely addressed: culture. If, as Stuart Hall has shown, the study of culture is inextricably tied to existing power relations within society at any given moment to examine how "marginal, or subordinate groups might secure or win, however temporarily, cultural space from the dominant group" (Procter, 2004), then this study is an attempt to locate what it is about 'cancel culture' that constitutes 'culture,' and how this informs popular ways in which 'cancel culture' is framed in the mass media and understood by individuals as a reflection of broader power structures in society. How does 'cancel culture' interact with public discourse in Singapore? Is 'cancel culture' a new phenomenon, or is it just an extension of existing modes of discourse and political action in Singapore? What affordances does 'cancel culture' bring, both as a concept and as a term?

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Purnima Kamath is a second year PhD student at the Department of Communications and New Media. Her primary interests are in exploring the notion of creativity using machine learning algorithms. Before joining NUS, she worked as a software engineer at various companies. She is also a founder and ex-Director of Women Who Code Singapore, a non-profit network which inspires more women in technology careers.

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Francis Luis M. Torres is currently pursuing his PhD in Cultural Studies in Asia at the Department of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore. He received his MA degree in Comparative Literature from the University of the Philippines-Diliman where he examined the genealogy of the Philippine gay culture. He was also an Assistant Professor at the High School Department at the University of the Philippines Cebu. His current research focuses on Asian queer and gay theory and criticism, Philippine digital cultures, and new media studies.

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Zishan Lai is a second year PhD student at the Department of Communications and New Media. Her research interests focus on new media, Asian popular culture and their intersections. Before starting her PhD journey in NUS, Zishan was a research assistant of Australian Research Council Discovery Project "New Consumer Cultures in the Global South".

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Samseer Mambra is a second-year PhD student at the Department of Communications and New Media (CSA programme). His current research lies at the intersection of communication technology, migration, and emotion. Before joining NUS, he worked in India as a financial journalist at Reuters and a policy researcher at IDF, focusing on digital literacy, migration, and innovation economy.
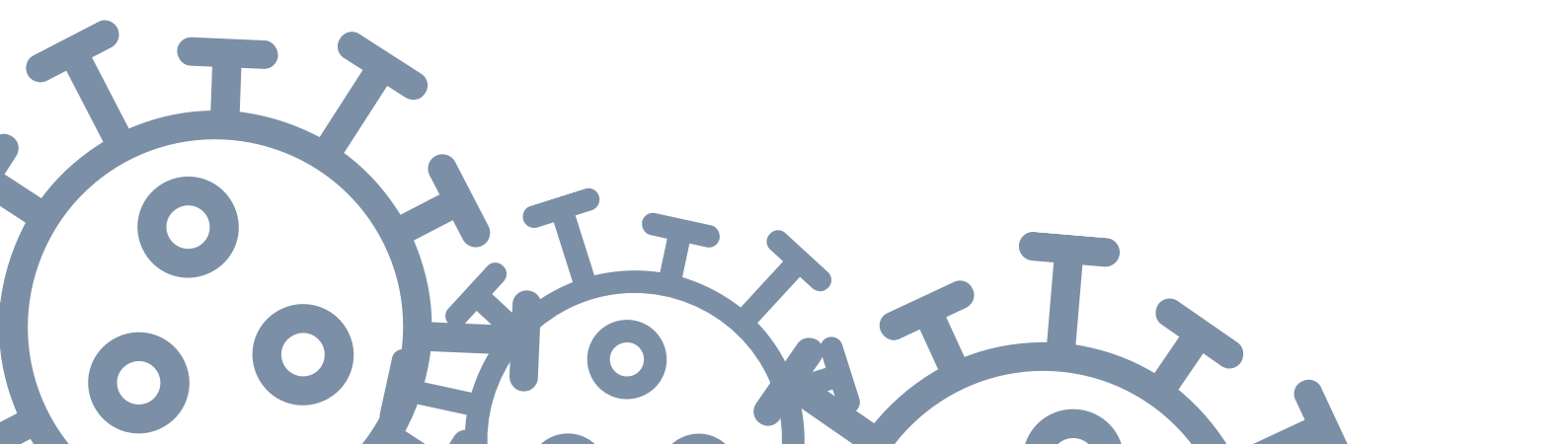
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Yuanyuan Wu is a first year PhD student at the Department of Communications and New Media.Her research interest is primarily risk communication and public understanding of risk. Before joining NUS, she worked at China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) as a product operation executive in Beijing, China.

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Qiaofei Wu is a second-year Ph.D. student at the Department of Communications and New Media. His research focuses on health communication, science communication, and computational communication. He is primarily interested in the effects of media and technology on human perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding specific health or science issues.

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