

Factors Affecting Short-Form Video Enjoyment

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Short-form videos are an increasingly popular form of online media, and there are rising concerns about excessive use of platforms that host them. While the effect of social endorsement on viewing time has been studied, that research has not established a causal relationship between the two variables. Online videos are typically accompanied by social endorsement metrics such as the like or comment count. This study used Instagram Reels' inbuilt *Hide like counts* option to test whether this manipulation impacts viewing time of short-form videos. Participants were randomly assigned to either *hidden* or *visible* like count conditions and asked to watch a playlist mimicking a typical scroll on Reels. The playlist consisted of 18 videos with a total duration of 378 seconds (6 minutes and 18 seconds).

Nine participants were recruited for this study. An initial comparison of group means suggested that the playlist viewing time for the *hidden* group ($n = 4$) was longer ($M = 345.25$ seconds, $s = 159.18$ seconds) than that of the *visible* group ($n = 5$; $M = 275.00$ seconds, $SD = 59.43$ seconds). However, a two-tailed independent samples t-test indicated that this difference was not statistically significant ($t = 0.9228$, $p = 0.3868$).

The lack of a significant effect was unsurprising, given the small size of this study's sample. A larger sample of approximately 80 participants would have been needed to detect a significant effect. However, this preliminary finding of a mean difference of over 1 full minute – a substantial portion of this short playlist – suggests this topic warrants further investigation. Findings from future research on this effect could inform best practices for users who want to spend less time watching short videos, and social media companies who want to redesign their interfaces to improve the user experience.

If you have any questions regarding the study, you can reach the faculty supervisor through email at patrick.carolan@smu.ca.