

# Comparison of Tik Tok and Television on the Field of Homogeneity, Authenticity and Unifying Power in the 20st Century

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## ABSTRACT

Along with the development of technology, media has changed a lot. In different era, people use different media. In the twentieth century, Walter Cronkite, the CBS evening news anchor, homogenized people on their knowledge, gave authentic news to the citizens, and unified people to be together. Television shows also played a role. In the twenty-first century, more new medias come out. People are allowed to do more on one medium. This article will compare and contrast television of twentieth-century and tiktok in the field of homogeneity, unifying power, and authenticity in order to give recommendations for modern social apps. Conclusion is that TikTok shows more unreliable news, appears fake beauties, and unified weakly.

**Keywords:** *Homogeneity, unifying power, authenticity, television, TikTok, walter Cronkite*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the theory of McQuail, “Television, ‘window on the world’ in real time”, has a sense of intimacy and personal involvement that it seems able to cultivate between the spectator and presenter or the actors and participants on screen. Television is the main source of news for people to be informed, the educator for citizens, and the place for entertainment” [7].

Marshall McLuhan said, “The Medium is the Message”. People need a medium to be informed for religious, political, and educational purpose; message requires a medium for spreading out among the targeted population. In different time period, people use different medium. Back to the twentieth century, people mainly used television, a mass media and responsible for publishing news or showing soap operas, as their medium. On television, the time was set for each TV show or coverage. Citizens were required to open their television on time in order to watch the show. If they were late, they missed the show. *I Love Lucy*, *M.A.S.H.*, and CBS news were the main shows television played in the twentieth century.

In the twenty-first century, more mediums are developed along the invention of internet, such as Wechat, TikTok, and instagram. People depend on more channels and develop more activities on the “mediums”. It is unnecessary to open these mediums punctually. Because internet has memory, people can search on internet to watch the show they missed. TikTok, found in 2016 in China, is a short video social app that allows people to create their own videos, select music, and choose filters. TikTok is a diversified app; sports, fashion, news, daily stories, and

other information that people want to express are shown on this app.

This article explores the differences and similarities between Tik Tok and television of the twentieth century on the aspect of homogeneity, authenticity, and unifying power. Homogeneity means the effect that people become increasingly similar with each other. Authenticity is the truthfulness or reliability of the information spread by mediums. Unifying power is the force that makes people unified.

## 2. HOMOGENEITY

First, TikTok and television both show homogeneity people in daily activity. In the twentieth century, Americans watched CBS anchor Walter Cronkite, the most trustworthy anchor and the maestro of the news, for getting world news and knowing what they should do at 7:30 evening[2]. People all gathered together and saw what happened. Being relied by American citizens, Walter Cronkite dictated news that Americans believed and gave them support during hard time[3]. His TV coverage bounded into Americans’ daily schedule. People thought that “if they lose Walter Cronkite in the Vietnam War, they lose the whole America”.

However, homogeneity tends to be more educational on the television era, but TikTok has a negative homogeneity effect. To attract audiences’ attention, a large pool of vulgar, ostentatious, and stupid videos are made and have a high speed of dissemination. For example, a reporter asks a pretty woman to calculate the total value on their clothes, accessories, and car she wears or uses for that day[4]. The total amount of money is over millions. A vlog from a group of girls with Hermes bags shows their trip to SanYa in the

most expensive hotels. These money worship, hedonism videos with misleading value system are watched by people, especially teenagers. Then, people begin to imitate wrong behaviors, worsening their ethics. [4]

TikTok users shoot the video, use the filter, and play the music that are the most trendy and popular, for example, the video “is that a pretty boy?” ; the filter that enlarges user’s head; and the popular song “How You Like That” by Blackpink. Particularly, “How You Like That” was used by over 400,000 times, and a large group of users, even celebrities, published their dancing videos using the song, like LiXiaoLu, KongXueEr. Furthermore, as the homogeneity power is extraordinarily strong, the QQ music app developed a TikTok ranking list, which is similar to Billboard. In the Fashion area, same clothing businesses add the tag “the same style with TikTok on clothes they sell. It is evident that people tend to become increasingly similar, making us harder to discern their characteristics. This harms the social diversity and makes people less unique. There will be a positive feedback loop if this influence continues. It is reasonable to infer that after several years, all people wear identical style and make same videos. Then, TikTok would be a boring platform that shows the similarity among people: every videos are copy-and-paste.

The homogeneity brought by TikTok may attribute to the fear of missing out(FOMO). Because of internet, people have obligations to contact with each other, or they are deviated by society. If they do not know what is in trending, it is difficult for them to have conversations or strengthen their relationship. In their career aspect, because intenser social pressure and competition are existed, people are forced to be on the ball for business and sociality. If they miss out, they become less competitive. Especially for marketing business, scrutinizing and employing TikTok help them to enhance their product development and advertisement.

In the television, people are homogenized based on education. During the Vietnam War, people were homogenized to watch and educated by Walter Cronkite. They learned the same News. Additionally, Rocky, acted by Desi, in the television show I Love Lucy had to Cheat on the tax based on the script, but Desi refused since he didn’t want to convey the idea which deceived the government to audiences. Desi’s intention gave people a lesson about patriotic and what television should convey. This sitcom acted morally and justly inside and outside of the show.

Admittedly, tiktok or television do not bring homogeneity. It is users themselves to show the homogeneity. These are both platform and medium for people to express, share, or learn.

### **3. AUTHENTICITY**

In respect of News, both television and Tiktok have the official channel for authentic news, such as CBS on television and the people’s daily account in TikTok; however, the news published on television gains higher authenticity. Television has strict regulations and is controlled by public authority[7]. In this case, the most

trusted man Walter Cronkite in television news took the truth of an event as the most serious and pivotal thing through his working life. He also emphasized that profit should not be the purpose of news, and news coverage needed more time and money for being responsible to citizens[3]. During the Vietnam war, Lyndon Johnson was invited and interviewed by Walter Cronkite in an exclusive report. Then, Walter Cronkite shared his own opinion and uncovered the fact of the end of the war. As an anchor, he was the one who told the truth to the general public[3].

For the television show I Love Lucy, Lucille Ball conveyed authenticity and the feeling that something was real. In this show, Lucy and Ricky was a couple. When Lucille was asked to be Lucy, she said that she would act only if she brought her own husband Desi Arnaz. Since the couple was authentic both in their normal life and the television show, audiences would notice that they watched a real couple and the show connected to their own life. Therefore, audiences would develop more trust toward this show or the whole television. This authenticity contributes the show to be the first successful sitcom in America and became one of television’s most beloved and enduring programs of all times.

Tiktok becomes another news source for people. RenMin daily news, CCTV news, and other authoritative news sites share news in this app[6]. People are able to acquire some reliable news. However, as everyone can have an account of TikTok, unlike television, normal citizens can share news or spread gossips randomly without having scripting[1]. This lowers the authenticity.

On TikTok, a large pool of “news” is unsubstantiated or biased; audiences cannot develop a comprehensive picture about the real event. As some TikTok users run their Tiktok for profit, which achieved by having a high number of likes, Click-Through-Rate, or page views, their purpose is no longer same with Walter Cronkite. Therefore, these accounts work to catch people’s attention rather than making people informed. For example, paparazzo put pictures of celebrities and give a catchy title on TikTok through their marketing accounts. A Chinese actress YangMi was shot by paparazzo when she went to the same hotel with a Chinese actor WeiDaXun. Then, the marketing accounts said that YangMi and WeiDaXun wear couple tees and have a steady love relationship. However, YangMi and WeiDaXun have not admit that they fall in love. It is marketing accounts themselves to assert their relationship. Also, this news is fragmented. Many accounts published the same videos use the exact same pictures. People can know the news from any marketing accounts.

The television and tiktok use special ways to make them look prettier, but TikTok has exceedingly unauthentic look. Professional television teams choose people who have the right shape or outline for their characters and use makeup, light effect, and filters to upgrade their appearance. This is based on people’s original look. Conversely, on TikTok, users are allowed to choose special adjustments which can enlarge their eyes, shorten their nose, and even sharpen their face shape to the favorable extent. Their actual look may be totally different with their filtered face. Thanks to the special

adjustment, everyone can gain a pretty appearance on TikTok. This has extremely low authenticity as your audiences cannot know what the person behind the screen looks like unless you unveil yourself. To some extent, this is a new way of being a catfish. As people may no longer use other's pictures, they adjust their face and become a new person. Then, they use their new face to be active on TikTok.

For users, they gain more opportunities due to the special adjustments, especially marginalized people. If people do not have a pretty face in real life, they can get it a good look on TikTok. They may enjoy the feeling that someone praise them on appearance. Now, a new job exists: live streaming. Without a pretty face, it is hard for users to succeed as audiences may not watch them or send gift to them. This is unfair to normal-looking people. With the adjustment, they are able to become better, attract audiences, and earn profit. Marginalized people can experience something they can't on TikTok. This may elevate their self-confidence and life satisfaction. TikTok's live streaming even become a new revenue stream for them.

#### **4. UNIFYING POWER**

Both TikTok and the television have unifying power, but television's is higher.

For example, the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H.) showed television's influential unifying power. M.A.S.H. was a critic of the Korean War played a year before the US ended direct military involvement in the Vietnam War. M.A.S.H. was a scheduled event for people to meet. A half hour weekly TV meeting that family have for watching M.A.S.H. was set. Using the stories happened among the army and local Korean people, it united people to think that war is disruptive, stressful, and harmful. This idea penetrated to contemporary people's mind, leading people to sympathize innocent people and oppose the war. M.A.S.H. gained a huge success that 106 million people watched Mash Finale in 1983.

Moreover, Walter Cronkite unified people to watch him every evening. Walter Cronkite was similar to a conductor, and his audiences were his band. People came together to watch the same anchor. Without him, people lost their unifier just like a car lost its guiding light. He used strategies to connect with and resonate with people. For example, when he talked about JFK, he took off his glasses. Taking off glasses seems like a neglectable behavior, but it was meaningful. This posture can mean an intimacy with his audiences as people took their glasses off before sleep. Audiences felt they were a family with Walter Cronkite, they had the same goal, and they worried for same thing. This also means the anchor may cry, so audiences felt that Walter Cronkite worried for their country and valued for citizens. He is not just an anchor, this gesture showed that he was an American and he stand with American citizens.

In the case of TikTok, it is an infiltration to modern people's life, but it is hard to unify people. Having 200 million as its DAU in 2018, TikTok becomes the selection

for people when they have nothing to do[5]. For teenagers, they open their Tiktok for relaxing in their fragmentary time. However, "using TikTok for 5 minutes is one hour in our real life". Immersed in intriguing and funny videos, teenagers forget the time and postpone their following schedule while watching Tiktok. The time for them to exercise or study is spent on TikTok[4]. In fact, they are devoured by TikTok but not unified. Compared with numerous attractive Tiktok videos, videos that connect people's spirit are paled and less competitive. Therefore, people are hard to be unified.

However, Tiktok has unifying power but relatively weak. In 2019, China celebrated for the 70th anniversary and organized a parade. TikTok showed the parade videos and gained extremely high amount of like. A video that showed the performance of our soldiers. Soldiers cried during the flag ceremony. This gave a sense of intimacy. As crying is a relatively personal behavior and shows true feelings, citizens felt more connected with people on the video. They were moved and developed a resonance with the soldiers. Chinese citizens are proud of being a Chinese inherently. People are united to show their patriotic heart.

Unfortunately, strong unifying power no longer exists. Today's news is fragmented. On TikTok, not only official accounts but also normal accounts share news. People learn partial things from different channels, making people harder to resonate with the anchor. Also, TikTok is mostly 15 seconds video, but Walter Cronkite's news report was 15 minutes to 30 minutes. 15 seconds is too short to show importance or empathy. Meanwhile, today's lifestyle is disparate with twentieth century. People are busier for business and socializing. It is unlikely for people to sit in front of TV at a stated time for watching news. People can watch news on their different news app or social app on phones and computers. They do not have a need to sit down and wait for the news to come. In the twenty-first century, media comes to people, but people came to media in the twentieth century. In this global village, people live in their own time zone. It is difficult to be united together.

Tiktok has its good side. If people do not have this short video app, it is arduous for people to know news. As people live in a faster lifestyle, it is important for them to use fragmentation time which is relatively in short period. Short videos, therefore, fit into people's life better than daily news report.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

People gain a negative homogeneity through the use of TikTok, but citizens acquired a knowledgeable homogeneity from television. Tiktok shows lower authenticity no matter on information or on users themselves. On the other hand, television had high regulations on the news or TV shows it played. On the field unifying power, citizens experienced the strong unifying power era on television, but that era is end forever.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks Professor Wegenstein from the John Hopkins University for teaching and commenting. Appreciate the assistant Michelle for helping to organize ideas.

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