“A REAL CHINA” ON USER-GENERATED VIDEOS? 
AUDIO-VISUAL NARRATIVES OF CONFUCIANISM

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ABSTRACT

China has over 560 million Internet users, more than the EU 27 countries’ citizens. Web 2.0/social media’s development in China has provided Chinese prosumers to express and share their mediated experiences and opinions from grass-roots’ perspectives, even challenging the mainstream media. Some Western scholars prefer the future scenario of a Westernized democratic China, mainly due to the ICTs’ rocketing development. Some Chinese scholars (e.g., Deng Zhenglai) argue that socio-cultural, economic and political developments with Chinese characteristics cannot be explained by the imported Western theories but only by Chinese perspectives.

The study intends to investigate the image of China as portrayed in Chinese prosumers’ videos and to interpret them in terms of the thoughts of Confucianism.

This thematic narrative analysis analyzes approximately 13 hours of the most-viewed user-generated videos on the China’s most popular video sharing platform - Youku. It has been shown that the grass-root prosumers on social media shape and reshape Chinese socio-cultures and portray “a real China”. Furthermore, with the investigation of the audio-visual narratives and their patterns of the user-generated videos, it can be argued that they are not only challenging, but supporting the mainstream party-state privileges, power and ideologies. These patterns reflect one of the foundations of China’s cultural and politico-ideological commitments, Confucianism.

Keywords: China, Confucianism, audio-visual narratives, Youku Paike videos