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Transforming cinema on YouTube: An integrative review of aesthetics, commodification, and socio-economic shifts

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ABSTRACT

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly transformed film production and consumption, shifting cinema to internet-based media like YouTube. This development necessitates an understanding of how film aesthetics, viewing practices, and industrial structures evolve in the digital age. While prior scholarship mainly examined industrial transitions and social media's influence, there's a critical gap in how digital platforms, specifically YouTube, reconfigure cinematic aesthetics and ontology. This study employs a qualitative integrative literature review to examine how YouTube, as a platform, rearticulates cinema's aesthetic dimensions and ontology. Key findings reveal three core themes: YouTube reimagines early cinematic aesthetics (*e.g.,* short duration, spectacle) as "digital attraction" through algorithmic optimization; it operates as a modern exhibition machine, commodifying content via its interface and algorithms; and these platform-driven dynamics generate significant socio-economic implications, compelling cinematic labor into a "prosumer" model and transforming traditional film consumption into a "hyper-social non-place". Ultimately, YouTube embodies a paradoxical hybrid cinematic environment, challenging filmmakers or content creators to balance artistic integrity with commercial demands. This study highlights the need to critically re-evaluate cinema's evolving form and function.

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1. Introduction

The rise of digital platforms has profoundly revolutionized the film production landscape, distribution, and consumption. This shift, from traditional cinema to internet-based media, raises critical questions about how film aesthetics, viewing practices, and industrial structures have evolved in the digital age. While cinema began as a technological spectacle in the 19th century, its migration to over-the-top (OTT) platforms like YouTube signals a transformation not only in format but in its very ontology. YouTube functions as a contemporary digital platform that reconfigures the aesthetic, economic, and cultural logic of cinema in the 21st century [1]. This platform operates as a content distribution site and a socio-technical system that redefines cinematic meaning through algorithmic mediation and user interactivity [2]. Building on Broeren's concept of "digital attraction" [3] and Kessler's theory of "attractive cinema" [4], YouTube's interface, algorithmic logic, and video formats reflect early cinema's exhibitionist mode of address. Content characterized by direct camera gazes, brief runtimes, and visual immediacy recycles stylistic features of pre-narrative cinema, not as nostalgia, but as a structural element of the platform itself. Understanding this transformation also requires

spatial and cultural frameworks. Cinema and digital platforms function as "non-places," referring to temporary, placeless environments where identity is fluid and context is abstracted [5], [6]. This notion extends to YouTube, an immersive digital landscape saturated with ephemeral visuals and transient sounds, emblematic of the hypermodern digital condition [7]. The platform thus embodies a spatial and affective dislocation, detaching cinematic experiences from theaters and embedding them within algorithmically personalized digital spaces. Most importantly, YouTube exemplifies cinema's adaptation under platform capitalism, where content is shaped by monetization, data extraction, and performance metrics. This reflects Van Dijck's broader critique of how cultural production is being reshaped by platform logics, where connectivity is no longer an end in itself but a mechanism for datafication and commercial gain [8]. In this context, film ceases to be a static object of aesthetic contemplation; instead, it becomes a dynamic unit of algorithmic circulation—fragmented, searchable, and endlessly reproducible [9].

The medium of film originated from significant advancements in image recording technology, beginning with Eadweard Muybridge's motion photography in 1878 and followed by innovations from Thomas Edison, William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, and the Lumière brothers in the late 19th century [10]–[12]. This early period of film development, before the widespread emergence of narrative cinema, is characterized as a form of "attractive cinema" [3]. In this mode, the primary focus was on exhibiting technological prowess and the novelty of moving images rather than complex storytelling, thereby fundamentally positioning cinema as a technological spectacle [3]. Building on this, Broeren and Kessler illuminate how early cinema prioritized "showing" over "telling" [3], [4]. Broeren describes this early cinema mode as "exhibitionist cinema" [3]. Key characteristics include frontality, where actors directly address the camera, short durations, and a preference for visual spectacle over narrative coherence. Examples such as Muybridge's *The human figure in motion* [10] and Louis Le Prince's *Roundhay Garden Scene* (1888) [13] exemplify this emphasis on capturing motion and displaying visual phenomena. These features, arising from technical constraints and deliberate aesthetic choices, profoundly shaped the viewer's experience. This period also shared significant characteristics with popular entertainment forms like vaudeville, where diverse, short acts focused on spectacle and direct engagement with the audience, establishing a lineage of fragmented yet captivating visual entertainment. In early cinema, technology emerged as a critical determinant of film art production, with extensive technological exploration often preceding narrative development [14], [15]. The evolution of film screening projectors, from rudimentary forms to advanced curved-screen displays like the Las Vegas Sphere [16], further demonstrates the importance of "how to show" in shaping the communicative art form. This historical trajectory reveals a continuous interplay between technological innovation and artistic expression, setting a precedent for cinema's ongoing adaptation to new viewing technologies.

YouTube has emerged as a crucial digital platform that significantly reconfigures the cinematic experience in the 21st century. Initially established as a platform for user-generated content (UGC), YouTube has become a major distributor of professional film content through its OTT services, mirroring the business models of companies like Netflix, HBO, and Amazon Prime Video [1], [17], [18]. This transition reflects a broader shift in film distribution, moving away from traditional channels and physical media towards digital platforms that offer increased accessibility and convenience. Notably, YouTube reactivates and reimagines early cinema aesthetics within its platformized architecture, embodying what Broeren describes as a "digital attraction" [3]. It also reflects what Vernallis characterizes as a "digital swerve," a stylistic quality of digital media marked by irreality, weightlessness, and discontinuity that reshapes cinematic practices into new aesthetic and experiential forms [19]. Its interface, algorithmic logic, and video formats often mirror the exhibitionist mode of address found in early cinema, characterized by direct camera gazes, brief runtimes, and an emphasis on visual immediacy. Furthermore, YouTube operates as a "non-place" [5]–[7], [6], embodying a spatial and affective dislocation where cinematic experiences are detached from traditional theaters and recast within algorithmically constructed attention economies. Instead of presenting a clear and continuous story, it delivers a constant stream of images—broken up, unpredictable, and shaped by endless scrolling—making the cinematic experience feel fluid, open-ended, and

emotionally unsettled [7]. Platform governance mechanisms, including content ranking algorithms, metadata optimization, and behavioral nudging, shape this reconfigured cinematic experience. Drawing from Van Dijck's exploration of platformization, YouTube illustrates how cultural participation is increasingly managed through invisible data capture and algorithmic sorting protocols, rather than through editorial or curatorial judgment [8]. Alongside Fuchs' framing of digital media as informational commodities [9], YouTube positions film as a unit of value subject to endless circulation, quantification, and monetization. While YouTube serves as a vast digital archive and repository of cultural memory, it also introduces paradoxes, including a high degree of automation through algorithms and the potential for addiction, challenging users to maintain objective appreciation. This transformation highlights how film, once an object of aesthetic contemplation, has become a dynamic unit of algorithmic circulation—fragmented, searchable, and endlessly reproducible.

Previous scholarship has extensively examined cinema's industrial transitions and the influence of social media on media consumption (*e.g.,* [20]–[22]). However, there remains a critical gap in understanding the complex ways digital platforms, specifically YouTube, actively reconfigure the very aesthetics and ontology of cinema. While the commodification of audiovisual content is acknowledged (*e.g.,* [18], [23], [24]), existing research often overlooks YouTube's dual role as both a distributor of professional film content and a platform for user-generated cinema, thereby producing a hybridized cultural field in which classical cinematic conventions are not only preserved but also adapted and recontextualized. Despite YouTube's growing dominance in film distribution, scholarly attention is limited regarding how its algorithmic architecture and monetization strategies specifically reactivate and reimagine early cinema aesthetics, such as short duration, frontality, and spectacle, within a contemporary, platformized framework. This research addresses the lack of a clear framework linking earlier cinematic aesthetics with today's platform-driven media landscape. It highlights the need to understand how YouTube's hybrid role as both professional distributor and UGC platform transforms cinematic conventions in ways not yet fully theorized. This study examines how YouTube, as a platform-based distribution and exhibition system, rearticulates cinema's aesthetic dimensions and ontology in the digital era. Specifically, it analyzes how early cinematic forms are reimagined and commodified through YouTube's interface, algorithms, and participatory culture, exploring the socio-economic implications this transformation carries for cinematic production and consumption.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Philosophical Orientation

This study employs a qualitative design informed by the integrative literature review (ILR) method, which enables the synthesis of diverse conceptual, theoretical, and empirical sources [25], [26]. The methodological approach is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, as articulated by Berger and Luckmann, which views knowledge as socially constructed and context-dependent [25]. It is further situated within an interpretivist research paradigm, which aligns with the ILR's emphasis on meaning-making across heterogeneous literature [25], [26]. From this philosophical standpoint, cinema is not regarded as a fixed or autonomous object, but as a culturally situated form whose meanings are shaped by shifting technological, economic, and social conditions over time [27]. This interpretive orientation enables an exploration of how the significance of cinema evolves across historical and industrial transitions, particularly in response to digital platform economies and modes of commodification [25], [28].

2.2. Inclusion Criteria and Scope of Review

The ILR method is particularly appropriate for this inquiry because it facilitates the synthesis of diverse theoretical frameworks, historical analyses, and conceptual insights from cinema studies, digital media, and critical cultural studies [25], [26]. Unlike systematic reviews, which emphasize empirical data aggregation, ILRs prioritize conceptual depth and theoretical integration. This method is particularly suitable for tracing cinema's transformation across historical, aesthetic, and technological periods, including the transition from early analog cinema through modern Hollywood to contemporary digital platforms such as YouTube and

OTT services. It also accommodates a wide range of scholarly materials, including theoretical essays, empirical studies, and book chapters [25], [26]. Inclusion criteria were established to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness, following integrative review principles that prioritize synthesizing conceptually rich, methodologically varied, and thematically significant literature [25], [26]. Drawing on these methodological foundations, the selection emphasized sources published in English that span from the late 19th century to the present and directly address the technological evolution, cultural shifts, and economic transformations in cinema and digital media. This included foundational and historically grounded texts on cinema's aesthetic and industrial development and contemporary analyses of digital platforms such as YouTube and their roles in reshaping cultural production and media economies. Studies and materials that did not contribute to a theoretically or historically rigorous understanding of cinema's digital transformation were excluded to maintain conceptual depth and analytical focus.

2.3. Data Collection

Relevant sources were identified through systematic and iterative purposive searches of academic platforms and databases, including Google Books, JSTOR, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, and publisher-specific repositories like Oxford Scholarship Online and SAGE Knowledge. These platforms were strategically selected for their extensive coverage across relevant disciplines such as film studies, media studies, communication, and cultural theory. Keyword combinations were meticulously applied, encompassing "cinema evolution" AND "digital platforms," "YouTube" AND "OTT cinema," "film commodification," and "cinematic aesthetics" AND "technology." Boolean operators were used to enhance breadth and precision. The search process was iterative, allowing for continuous refinement of keywords and search strings as initial relevant articles were identified, ensuring thorough coverage of the literature.

2.4. Data Analysis

A comprehensive list of 18 key scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and book chapters, was selected based on their conceptual relevance and potential to inform the study's thematic focus. These include landmark works by scholars such as Elsaesser, Vernallis, Iversen, Kessler, and Van Dijck, among others. The selected texts were subjected to inductive thematic analysis following the literature identification process. This involved iterative close reading, manual coding, and categorizing emerging insights into recurring thematic patterns aligned with the research objectives. Manual coding was conducted using Microsoft Excel, enabling annotation, comparison, and thematic refinement over multiple reading cycles. This analytical process was informed by an understanding of cinema's evolving aesthetic and technological characteristics, from early motion studies and narrative cinema to modern electronic and digital forms, including the emergent phenomena of UGC and platform economies. Attention was also given to the socio-economic implications of digital distribution, content commodification, and audience reception within new media ecologies. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section, organized around three major themes that collectively illustrate cinema's transition from analog spectacle to digital commodification, particularly within the context of YouTube and platform economies. This approach offers an informed understanding of cinema as both an artistic expression and a cultural-economic artifact shaped by evolving technological and industrial forces.

3. Results and Discussion

Through our ILR, the analysis identifies three core themes: how YouTube reimagines early cinematic aesthetics for the digital age; its function as a modern exhibition machine that commodifies content through its interface and algorithms; and the significant socio-economic implications this generates for cinematic labor and consumption.

3.1. Theme 1: Early Cinematic Aesthetics Reimagined on YouTube and Digital Platforms

In line with this study's objective, our analysis examines how YouTube reimagines and rearticulates cinema's aesthetic dimensions in the digital era. The platform does not merely repeat history but functionally reimagines the early cinematic mode of "digital attraction" as

conceptualized by Broeren [3], and this reading is further supported by Kessler's analysis of YouTube's engagement with early audiovisual forms [4]. This form of attraction-based cinema is characterized by short duration, spectacle, and technological exhibitionism, which parallels many of YouTube's viral and short-form videos today. Briefly tracing key milestones, Muybridge's *The Horse in Motion* of 1878, a groundbreaking series of photographs, utilized multiple cameras to capture the motion of a galloping horse, thereby contributing significantly to the study of motion and the development of cinematography [10]. Similarly, Louis Le Prince's *Roundhay Garden Scene* of 1888, lasting approximately 2.11 seconds, is one of the earliest known motion pictures [13]. As for the category of narrative films in the early period of cinema, the early milestones are *Dickson Greeting* (1891) [29] and *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895) [29], both of which are one minute long. These early works are not just historical milestones; they represent a cinematic style focused on spectacle and technological exhibitionism—features that closely resemble the short, viral videos commonly seen on YouTube today. During the early cinema period, technology emerged as one of the key determinants of the production of film art. As demonstrated by Muybridge and Prince, the process often began with extensive technological exploration, followed by narrative development [30]. Dickson and the Lumière brothers then successfully integrated narrative elements into their short films, highlighting the dual importance of technological innovation and storytelling [6], [30], [31]. This evolution reflects Broeren's emphasis on the art of "how to show," which remains central in shaping cinematic communication [3]. This emphasis on "how to show" persists strongly in today's digital exhibition practices on YouTube. The platform's interface, algorithmic curation, and participatory culture collectively transform early cinematic aesthetics, such as spectacle and technological exhibitionism, into new, interactive forms of engagement and viral visibility. While cinema exhibition technology has evolved dramatically, from early optical devices to immersive digital displays like the Las Vegas Sphere's curved-screen projection (Fig. 1), YouTube represents a parallel evolution within the virtual realm. Instead of physical spectacle, YouTube offers an algorithmically optimized spectacle that reshapes how audiences engage with moving images, as its platform architecture and algorithms govern content visibility and participatory consumption dynamics [1], [2], [8].

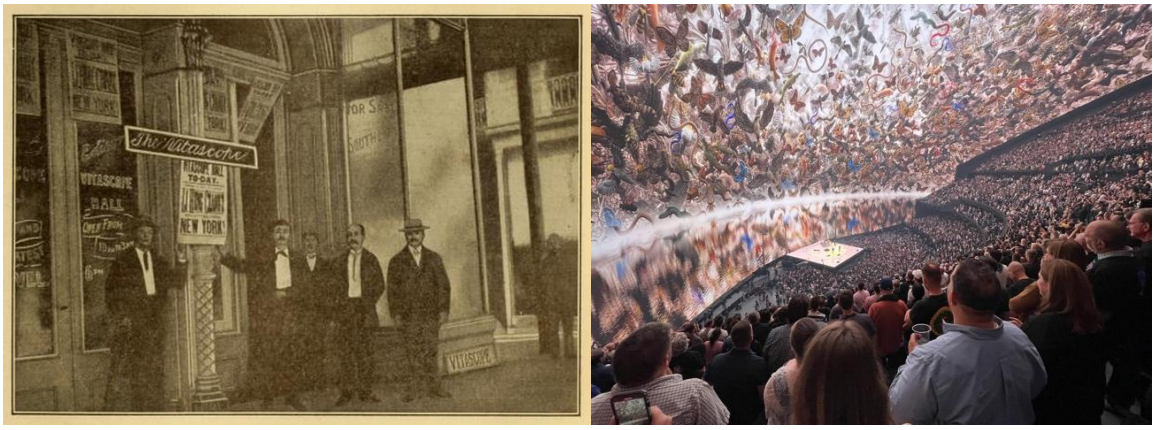

Fig. 1. A historical comparison of cinema theaters: The left photo shows the Vitascope Hall, one of the earliest cinemas in America, while the right photo depicts the Las Vegas Sphere, a modern theater featuring advanced curved screen technology.

Moreover, these platform dynamics extend beyond exhibition to transform the very ontology of cinema, shifting production, distribution, and reception toward participatory, algorithmically driven, and commodified forms. While primarily aesthetic, this digital exhibition mode also begins to signal a broader transformation with socio-economic implications for cinematic labor and consumption, particularly within the logic of platform capitalism—developments that will be explored in subsequent themes. This digital exhibition mode thus shows the enduring relevance of technological attraction, albeit mediated through platform logics rather than traditional cinema architecture. To visualize this recurring pattern, the researchers have mapped the periodization of cinema's evolution in Table 1, highlighting how attractive and narrative forms coexist and adapt across different technological eras:

Table 1. Periodization of Cinema

Period	Development Stage	Era	Distinctive Characteristics
Early Cinema	Attractive Cinema	Lumière Era	Exploration of analogue recording techniques, very short duration, vaudeville cinema form
	Narrative Cinema	Classic Hollywood	Silent film, black and white, dubbed sound, medium/long duration, traditional cinema.
Modern	Attractive Cinema	2005	Exploration of electronic recording and editing techniques, forms of vaudeville cinema.
	Narrative Cinema	Modern Hollywood	Films in colour, musicals, modern cinema.
Digital Platform	Attractive Cinema	Internet	Exploration of digital recording techniques, short duration, distribution through social media, YouTube, etc., forms of vaudeville cinema.
	Narrative Cinema	Broadband	OTT platforms, "non-place" cinema.

From this periodization, it becomes evident that narrative and attractive cinema are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist and continuously adapt in response to technological and cultural shifts. Each era witnesses a dynamic interplay between storytelling and spectacle, shaped by evolving recording and exhibition technologies. This dialectic takes on new forms in the digital platform era, as YouTube and similar platforms become the primary venues for both modes. Here, the aesthetics of early cinema, characterized by short duration, spectacle, and technological exhibitionism, are not simply replicated but fundamentally reimagined and commodified through algorithmic mediation, participatory culture, and platform economics. This transformation disrupts traditional cinema's production and distribution hierarchies, enabling unprecedented UGC, virality, and niche audience formation. Consequently, YouTube exemplifies a hybrid cinematic environment where early cinematic attraction and contemporary digital consumption converge, reinforcing and extending the core themes of this study by illustrating how early cinematic aesthetics persist, evolve, and acquire new meanings in the context of digital media ecosystems.

3.2. Theme 2: YouTube as a Modern Exhibition Machine: Commodification via Interface and Algorithms

Beyond aesthetics, YouTube functions primarily as a socio-technical infrastructure that commodifies content through its interface and algorithms. This commodification is embedded in the platform's architecture, transforming artistic expression into a digital commodity that operates under specific economic principles. As Van Dijck notes, YouTube was initially developed as an alternative to television [8]. Since Google's acquisition in 2006, it has increasingly resembled multi-channel television, hosting a vast array of programs designed for online video consumption. This transformation from a user-driven platform to an advertising-driven model significantly contributed to its popularity. Unlike competitors such as Vimeo or Dailymotion, YouTube successfully leveraged the monetization of UGC, integrating advertising as its core strategy [32]. Through monetization, YouTube has effectively commodified its content. Fuchs argues that information content, as a commodity, has several characteristics [9]. When applied to digital content on YouTube, these characteristics imply: (1) it is non-rivalrous in consumption, meaning digital content can be accessed by countless viewers simultaneously without diminishing its availability; (2) it is infinitely reproducible without depletion, as content files can be copied and distributed; (3) it is immune to physical depreciation, unlike tangible goods, so digital content does not degrade over time or with repeated viewing; (4) it is rapidly transmittable, allowing content to be instantly streamed or downloaded globally; (5) it reflects social histories and interactions, as content on YouTube accrues engagement metrics like views, likes, and comments, shaping its social value and visibility; (6) it is expensive to produce but cheap to disseminate, indicating that the high upfront cost of film or content making contrasts with YouTube's low marginal cost of digital distribution; and (7) it is typically sold at prices

exceeding its actual cost, as the economic value generated from digital content consumption (*e.g.,* through advertisements or subscriptions) often far exceeds its marginal distribution cost. These properties allow YouTube to turn content into profitable assets, especially in the era of the attention economy.

This commodified content economy initially provoked strong resistance from traditional media industries, particularly because YouTube hosted videos that frequently incorporated copyrighted material. Content such as music videos, news clips, and lip-sync performances often blurred the boundaries of legality. This conflict culminated in high-profile legal disputes, most notably the $1 billion lawsuit filed by Viacom against YouTube in 2007, epitomizing the clash between legacy media institutions and emergent user-generated platforms. This lawsuit, emblematic of tensions in the digital content economy, has been extensively analyzed within media and communication literature [33]. In response to growing demand and copyright pressure, YouTube introduced OTT services, enabling users to access film collections legally through a subscription-based model. This move expanded the platform's revenue model beyond advertising. Launched in 2010 under the name YouTube Movies and Shows (now integrated into the main YouTube platform as Movies & TV), this OTT venture marked YouTube's entry into more formalized content distribution channels [34], [35]. As of 2024, revenue from YouTube's OTT business is estimated between $20–28 million, a relatively modest but symbolically significant stream that reflects YouTube's continuous adaptation to regulatory and market pressures [35].

3.3. Theme 3: The Socio-Economic Implications of YouTube's Cinematic Ecosystem

This platform-driven commodification results in profound socio-economic implications, reshaping labor dynamics within the film industry and creating a complex tension between artistic expression and commercial viability. This economic transition reflects the broader socio-cultural evolution of cinema as it moves from conventional distribution channels to digital platforms. The shift to online distribution has also reshaped employment and labor dynamics within the industry. Traditional roles, such as projectionists, have transitioned into digital content management positions, signifying more than a simple job change; it represents a fundamental restructuring of film labor. This analysis of cinematic production and consumption directly addresses a core component of the research objective. Independent s, in particular, must adopt a "prosumer" identity, acting simultaneously as director, editor, marketer, and community manager [2]. This creates a precarious economic reality where creative success is linked to algorithmic appeasement and constant digital labor [2]. This evolution also mirrors broader shifts in the creative industries, where the value of digital content is often determined by its ability to attract advertising revenue and viewer engagement, rather than by traditional markers such as artistic merit [1]. This transformation echoes earlier periods of cinematic disruption, such as the shift from vaudeville exhibition to narrative cinema, suggesting that YouTube represents a new aesthetic and economic reconfiguration stage shaped by its platform logics [3], [4]. To provide a solid theoretical basis for these socio-economic implications, examining how YouTube rearticulates cinema's ontology through a socio-spatial framework is crucial. This is best explained by Augé's concept of the "non-place" [5]. Augé describes non-places as transitive and asocial spaces that negate traditional anthropological notions of place [5]. This concept was first applied to cinema by Wollen, who argues that a cinema becomes a non-place when a film begins, transporting the audience to an imaginary space [6]. The YouTube experience follows a similar process, simultaneously placing users everywhere and nowhere and blurring the lines between physical and virtual presence [36]. Thus, the platform reimagines the consumption space, with Iversen characterizing it as a "sea of images and sounds" offering diverse, dislocated experiences [7]. This transformation of cinematic space into algorithmically optimized non-places is not just aesthetic, but deeply economic, embedding commodification within the architecture of everyday participation [7], [8].

This spatial shift is a key implication of what Augé calls "supermodernity," a condition that reshapes how culture is produced and consumed [5]. Unlike modernity, which created grand narratives, or postmodernity, which deconstructed them, supermodernity is characterized by an overabundance of events, spatiality, and the individualization of reference [5]. This directly reflects the information overload and algorithmically driven consumption on YouTube. While

Augé's non-place is typically conceived as asocial, YouTube complicates this framework by functioning as a "hyper-social" platform, characterized by intense social interactions and participatory culture that transform dislocated digital spaces into sites of engagement and community [37]. This "participatory culture" is a key mechanism through which content is commodified. Rather than eroding engagement, YouTube intensifies it, embedding interaction directly within its economic model. It facilitates complex interactions through video sharing, commenting, and subscriptions, which extend directly into the economic sphere and contribute to evolving models of social commerce and influencer culture. This process exemplifies Van Dijck's "culture of connectivity," which describes how social media platforms like YouTube intertwine social interactions with economic systems [8]. Van Dijck's concept highlights how YouTube transforms connectivity into a form of infrastructure, where personal interaction, audience labor, and algorithmic visibility are not just incidental to media production but foundational to the platform's economic and cultural logic [8].

This suggests that content, which is identical to high art products and closely associated with the leisure consumption culture of going to the cinema, is transforming into a more instant consumption model [1]. Content collections now dominate the YouTube homepage, exemplifying a broader trend in media consumption. This shift sees artworks, previously confined to specific physical or temporal contexts, becoming instantly accessible through digital platforms. Ever since the Avant-Garde art movement developed in France, the map of art movements and works has changed [38]. This school adheres to experimental, radical, and unorthodox principles, emerging from art activism groups determined to draw attention to overlooked aspects of everyday life, most notably as a form of resistance against the traditional art institution. [38]. This Avant-Garde impulse to collapse the distinction between art and life is mirrored in the practices of contemporary YouTube creators. Video essayists, for example, often use clips from mainstream films (life/culture) to construct a critical analysis (art), thereby using the platform for social commentary and resistance against the institutional narratives of cinema, embodying a modern form of street-level criticism. In doing so, these creators reconfigure the boundary between consumer and producer, merging artistic labor with critical engagement in a platform-mediated economy [39], [40]. Ultimately, these socio-economic pressures culminate in what Elsaesser identifies as the central paradox of YouTube, where the platform's interface and algorithms create a constant tension between democratic potential and commercial constraints [31]. In his article, Elsaesser describes some of the thoughts of figures who think the presence of new media will undermine the value of art [31]. This is due to revolutionary changes in artistic techniques, so there will be a distinction between old and new art.

Elsaesser highlights the YouTube phenomenon as a paradox [31]. The first paradox is that YouTube is created with a high degree of automation, and information is formed mathematically through a programming architecture in such a way as to be supported by specific search systems and algorithms. The second paradox is that what is presented on it will represent the battle between high art and low art, what is entertaining and what is not, what is highly informative and what is not, what is educational and what is not, and so on. The third paradox is that while YouTube has positive aspects, it also has certain weaknesses. Elsaesser points out the potential for addiction created by YouTube as each video drags us to continue viewing another video and so on [31]. At this point, it is difficult for humans to balance certain boundaries to maintain an objective appreciation of a work. The filmmaker or content creator is thus caught in a "digital swerve" [19], forced to balance artistic integrity with the commercial demands of a platform that prioritizes engagement metrics above all else.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that YouTube is not merely a new distribution channel but a robust socio-technical infrastructure that fundamentally reshapes cinema's aesthetics and ontology. We found that YouTube reimagines early cinematic aesthetics, such as short duration, spectacle, and overt technological exhibitionism, by transforming them into algorithmically optimized, interactive forms of digital attraction, thereby echoing early cinema's focus on technological display within a contemporary context. As a modern exhibition machine, the platform deeply embeds commodification directly into its interface and algorithms, effectively converting

artistic expression into a digital commodity and reorienting economic models from traditional media to an attention economy driven by UGC and platform-specific monetization. This platform-driven commodification carries significant socio-economic implications, pushing cinematic labor into a "prosumer" model highly dependent on pleasing platform algorithms and sustaining digital engagement. Theoretically, this rearticulates cinema's ontology through Augé's concept of "non-place," with YouTube representing a "hyper-social" evolution where pervasive connectivity and participatory culture drive commercial value, transforming dislocated digital spaces into vibrant communities. Ultimately, YouTube embodies a paradoxical hybrid cinematic environment where early cinematic attraction converges with contemporary digital consumption, compelling filmmakers or content creators to navigate a "digital swerve" between artistic integrity and the commercial demands of platform logic. Given this, independent filmmakers and content creators should strategically embrace the "prosumer" identity, optimizing content for short-form engagement and exploring diverse monetization avenues beyond traditional advertising. Industry players ought to recognize YouTube as a primary site of cinematic evolution, developing hybrid strategies that leverage its reach for content promotion and exploring new content forms. Finally, policymakers must acknowledge the complex socio-economic implications of platformized cinema, developing frameworks that balance platform economics with creator rights and cultural diversity in the digital age. This ongoing transformation necessitates critically re-evaluating cinema's evolving form and function.

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