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From Lectures to Likes – Conceptualising Short-Form Social Media for Enhancing Student Engagement

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Abstract

Student engagement remains a persistent challenge in higher education, particularly in the post-pandemic context where lecture attendance has declined (Kerrigan & Foster, 2021; Ross, 2022), students increasingly balance paid employment with study (Higher Education Policy Institute, 2025), and digital technologies are reshaping learning behaviours (Jisc, 2025). At the same time, short-form social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have become central to how many students consume information and engage with digital content (GWI, 2025; We Are Social, 2025). Despite their popularity, the pedagogical potential of these platforms within higher education remains underexplored, particularly in applied disciplines such as Hospitality and Tourism (H&T). This conceptual paper examines how short-form social media can be integrated into H&T curricula to enhance student engagement and support learning.

Drawing on literature relating to student engagement, social media, micro-learning, and Cognitive Load Theory, the paper proposes that carefully designed short-form video content may provide accessible, engaging, and cognitively manageable learning resources (Bilderback & Farrell, 2025; Sweller, 1988). Such content can be used to support lecture preparation, reinforce key concepts, guide learning activities, and facilitate assessment and revision (Cirillo, 2006). The paper further explores the value of lecturer-generated and student co-created content as a means of promoting active participation, relevance, and community building within the learning environment.

To investigate these propositions, a mixed-methods research design is proposed, involving the development and pilot implementation of short-form educational videos across selected H&T modules. Quantitative measures of engagement, attendance, and academic performance will be complemented by surveys and semi-structured interviews with students and staff to explore perceptions of effectiveness and usability. The intended outcome is the development of a conceptual framework to guide the pedagogically informed integration of short-form social media into higher education teaching. The study contributes to emerging discussions on digital learning by offering a new perspective on how familiar social media formats can be leveraged to enhance student engagement, accessibility, and learning outcomes in contemporary higher education settings.

Keywords

Student Engagement, Social- Media, Co-creation, Teaching and Learning, Pedagogy.

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