
AI-Generated Short Videos and Their Potential Effects on Users: A Buddhist Self-Awareness Approach to Mindful Media Consumption

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Abstract

This academic article adopts a conceptual approach informed by a narrative review of literature on AI-generated short videos, digital-media consumption, user cognition and emotion, and Buddhist mindfulness. The article thematically examines academic studies and selected primary Buddhist sources to develop a framework for mindful and responsible media consumption. The article addresses three interconnected themes: (1) the emergence of AI-generated short videos on social-media platforms, (2) their potential effects on users, and (3) Buddhist self-awareness as an approach to learning and responsible digital-media consumption.

The reviewed literature indicates a transition from predominantly human-produced short-form videos toward increasing use of AI-assisted and AI-generated content. Generative AI can support scriptwriting, image and voice generation, editing, and other stages of content production, while platform recommendation systems separately rank and personalize the content presented to users. Research on short-form video use raises concerns regarding attention, cognitive fatigue, credibility judgments, and habitual scrolling; however, the available evidence does not establish that AI-generated short videos alone directly cause these outcomes. From a Buddhist perspective, *sīla* (ethical discipline), *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sati* (mindfulness), and *sampajañña* (clear comprehension) provide complementary principles for more reflective digital engagement. These principles encourage users to notice what they are doing, examine the purpose and possible consequences of continued viewing or sharing, and make a deliberate ethical choice. The proposed framework therefore treats Buddhist self-awareness not as a rejection of digital media but as a way of engaging with emerging forms of content without surrendering reflective judgment.

Keywords: AI-generated short videos; Artificial intelligence (AI); Buddhist self-awareness; Mindfulness; Media consumption

Introduction

Thinking The contemporary digital landscape has been reshaped by the rapid growth of short-form video across platforms such as TikTok, Facebook Reels, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. Recent developments in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have further expanded the capacity to produce written, audio, visual, and video content at scale. In short-form video settings, disclosure that content is AI-generated can influence users' perceptions of content quality and engagement intentions (Chen et al., 2025). At the same time, the growing production and circulation of synthetic or highly automated content raise broader concerns about content accuracy, misinformation, and credibility within online environments (Candogan & Drakopoulos, 2020).

Digital-media effects also depend on how users interpret interface and source cues. Source disclosure and visible interface features can activate cognitive heuristics, or 'rules of thumb,' that influence judgments of credibility and quality (Sundar, 2008). Interactive-media features may likewise shape user psychology by directing attention toward salient cues and encouraging particular forms of engagement (Sundar et al., 2015). In short-form video environments, algorithmically curated feeds may use emotionally salient and highly engaging content to sustain attention, potentially encouraging habitual or less reflective patterns of consumption. These processes should still be distinguished from content generation itself: generative AI creates or helps create content, whereas recommender systems select, rank, and personalize what users encounter.

To navigate rapidly changing digital environments without becoming overly dependent on algorithmically selected content, Buddhist principles can provide a framework for self-awareness, ethical conduct, and wise reflection. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* presents the four establishments of mindfulness as a systematic path of observing body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena (Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu & Bodhi Bhikkhu, 1995). Within this broader Buddhist framework, ethical discipline supports mental cultivation, while concentration and insight weaken unwholesome tendencies and develop wisdom (Bodhi Bhikkhu, 2005). Applied conceptually to contemporary digital media, these principles may support more conscious and responsible consumption patterns.

A conceptual and interdisciplinary gap remains because technological developments and contemplative approaches are often discussed separately. In particular, scholars have paid limited attention to connecting AI-generated short-form videos with Buddhist doctrinal and ethical principles such as *sīla* (ethical discipline), *sati* (mindfulness), and *sampajañña* (clear comprehension). This article therefore examines three main issues: (1) the emergence of AI-generated short videos on social-media platforms, (2) their potential effects on users, and (3) the possible application of Buddhist self-awareness to learning and responsible digital-media consumption. By bringing these perspectives together, the article proposes a Buddhist approach that may help users move from automatic, habitual scrolling to more conscious, reflective, and responsible engagement with digital content.

The Emergence of AI-Generated Short Videos on Social Media Platforms

AI-generated short-form video is changing both content production and audience engagement patterns on social media. Two developments are especially relevant: the growing use of generative AI to create short-form content and the role of recommendation algorithms in shaping what users see and how long they stay engaged.

From Human-Produced Videos to AI-Generated Content

Artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) refers to material created wholly or partly through generative AI systems. AIGC is increasingly visible in advertising and social-media production, including AI-generated short-video advertising (Yan, 2026). Research on AI-generated advertising suggests that audience responses depend on message design and the perceived role of AI: consumers may respond more positively to some AI-generated advertisements, particularly when the appeals fit perceived AI capabilities (Chen et al., 2024). At the same time, disclosure that a message is AI-generated can reduce evaluations or preferences among users who already hold negative attitudes toward AI (Lim & Schmälzle, 2024). These developments indicate a transition from predominantly human-produced short-form videos toward increasingly AI-assisted and AI-generated content. Generative AI can support scriptwriting, image and voice generation, editing, and other stages of content production, thereby lowering some barriers to producing short-form media.

Short-Video Consumption and User Attention

Generative AI and recommendation systems perform related but distinct functions within short-video environments. AIGC systems can generate multimodal material, including text, images, audio, and video, and may support interactive or personalized forms of communication (Liu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Platform recommendation systems, by contrast, analyze behavioral signals such as viewing time, likes, comments, shares, searches, and followed accounts to rank and present content that may correspond to users' inferred interests. Distinguishing these functions matters because the psychological effects of consuming short-form video cannot automatically be attributed to AI-generated content.

By continuously analyzing interaction data, recommendation algorithms can create highly personalized and rapidly updated social-media feeds. AI-generated short videos may appear in those feeds and attract attention through novelty, personalization, and emotionally salient presentation. However, AI-generated content may also contain inaccurate or misleading information when produced or distributed without adequate human oversight. Its growing prevalence can make it difficult for users to determine whether a video is human-created, AI-generated, or a combination of both. These developments raise questions about authenticity, credibility, transparency, and the quality of short-form digital content.

Potential Effects of AI-Generated Short Videos on Users

AI-generated short videos offer creative and communicative opportunities, but they grow within a broader short-form video environment already associated with concerns about attention, cognition, credibility, and habitual media use. The evidence reviewed below should therefore be interpreted as contextual rather than as proof that AI-generated videos alone produce these outcomes.

Effects on Users' Attention and Cognitive Experience

Previous research suggests that intensive short-form video use may be associated with changes in attentional functioning. An EEG study found that greater short-video addiction tendency was associated with lower self-control and reduced executive control during attention-related tasks (Yan et al., 2024). Alruwaili (2025), in the study "Scroll Immersion and Short-Form Video Use: Predictor of Attention, Memory, and Fatigue among Saudi Social Media Users,"

examined 745 social media users and found that the frequency and duration of short-form video use, together with scroll immersion, were associated with difficulty in attention, working-memory disruption, and cognitive fatigue.

Together, these studies suggest that problematic patterns of short-form video use and immersive scrolling may affect users' attentional and cognitive experiences. Importantly, the cited studies examine short-form video consumption generally, not AI-generated videos specifically. Their findings therefore provide contextual evidence for considering how increasing volumes of AI-generated short-form content may interact with existing patterns of intensive or habitual media consumption.

Effects on Credibility, Message Evaluation, and Perceived Authenticity

Continuous exposure to algorithmically selected content may influence users' attention, information processing, emotional responses, and evaluations of digital messages. In research on AI-generated short-video advertising, credibility and trustworthiness emerge as important dimensions of perceived quality (Yan, 2026). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offers a framework for understanding these judgments: when information is personally relevant, users are more likely to engage in effortful, central-route processing, whereas other situations may rely more on peripheral cues (Kitchen et al., 2014). Industry evidence also indicates continued skepticism toward generative-AI advertising among younger consumers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials (Williamson & Koch, 2024). These findings suggest that users do not receive AI-generated content passively; source disclosure, prior attitudes, perceived relevance, and credibility cues can all shape evaluation.

Overall, the literature suggests that AI-generated content may influence how users evaluate the credibility, trustworthiness, and quality of digital messages. The ELM helps explain why personally relevant information may receive deeper scrutiny, while research on AI-source disclosure shows that prior attitudes toward AI can affect message evaluation (Lim & Schmäzlze, 2024). The evidence therefore supports a cautious interpretation: AI-generated content raises new questions about credibility and authenticity, but users' responses depend on context, disclosure, prior attitudes, and message characteristics.

Buddhist Self-Awareness for Learning and Responsible Digital Media Consumption

The rise of AI-generated short videos reflects changing patterns of media production and consumption. From a Buddhist perspective, users can respond not by rejecting technology, but by cultivating ethical conduct, mindful awareness, and clear comprehension when engaging with digital content.

Buddhist Ethical Responsibility on AI-Generated Short Videos

The *Sigālovāda Sutta* presents ethical conduct as a foundation for responsible social relationships and identifies harmful actions, including false speech, that should be abandoned (Walshe, 1995, p. 462). The Dhammapada likewise emphasizes non-harming and the ethical consequences of actions that cause harm to others (Buddharakkhita, 1985). Applied to digital-media environments, these teachings support an ethical responsibility to avoid deceptive, harmful, or misleading communication. This responsibility applies not only to individual users but also to content creators, advertisers, and platform operators whose choices shape the quality and trustworthiness of the digital environment.

Table 1. Buddhist Ethical Responsibilities in AI Short-Video Consumption

Actor	Buddhist Principle	Practical responsibility	Expected ethical benefit
Users	sīla sammā-vācā	Check information before sharing; avoid false, harmful, or disrespectful communication; reflect before reacting or reposting	More mindful, responsible, and respectful media use
Content creators	sīla sammā-vācā	Produce accurate content, avoid deception and harmful speech, and disclose significant AI involvement when appropriate	Greater honesty, transparency, and trust
Advertisers	sīla sammā-vācā	Avoid deceptive AI-generated claims, manipulated representations, and misleading emotional appeals	More ethical and transparent communication with consumers
Platform operators	sīla; non-harming ethical conduct	Improve transparency, provide reporting and labeling mechanisms, and consider the effects of recommendation practices	A safer, more transparent, and responsible digital environment

Note. Developed by the author as a conceptual application of *sīla* and *sammā-vācā* to different actors in AI-mediated short-video environments.

Buddhist ethical principles can be applied differently according to the roles of users, content creators, advertisers, and platform operators. For users, *sīla* and *sammā-vācā* encourage careful communication, verifying information before sharing, and avoiding harmful or misleading content. For content creators, these principles support truthful and responsible production, including appropriate transparency about significant AI involvement. Advertisers should avoid deceptive claims and manipulated representations that may mislead audiences. Platform operators, although not individual speakers, also influence the conditions under which content is recommended and circulated and can support harm reduction through transparency, reporting, labeling, and responsible recommendation practices. Table 1 summarizes these role-based responsibilities as an author-developed application of Buddhist ethical principles to AI-mediated short-video environments.

Buddhist Mindfulness on AI-Generated Short Videos

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, mindfulness is presented as part of a systematic practice involving awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena, along with observing their arising and passing away (Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu & Bodhi Bhikkhu, 1995). In this context, *sati* involves maintaining awareness of present experience rather than remaining absorbed in automatic reactions. Applied conceptually to digital-media use, such awareness can help users notice the act of watching, scrolling, reacting, or sharing rather than becoming fully carried away by the flow of content.

Sampajañña, or clear comprehension, complements *sati* by emphasizing clear understanding of purpose, appropriateness, and consequences while performing an activity. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* connects mindfulness and clear comprehension with ordinary activities such as walking, sitting, eating, speaking, and responding to one's surroundings (Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu & Bodhi Bhikkhu, 1995). Applied to AI-generated short videos, *sati* can help users recognize what they are doing in the present moment, while *sampajañña* encourages them to ask why they are engaging with the content, whether continued consumption or sharing is beneficial, and what consequences may follow.

Table 2. Buddhist Mindfulness Application to AI-Generated Short Videos

Buddhist Concept	Meaning	Main Function	Application to AI Short Videos	Key Questions
sati (Mindfulness)	Maintaining awareness of present experience	Recognize what is happening in the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena	Notice the experience of watching, scrolling, reacting, and sharing AI-generated videos	What am I experiencing now?
sampajañña (Clear Comprehension)	Clear understanding of purpose, appropriateness, and consequences	Understand why an action is being performed and its possible consequences	Examine why the user is watching the video, whether the activity is appropriate and beneficial, and what may result from continued consumption or sharing	Why am I doing this? Is it beneficial? What may happen?
sīla (Ethical Discipline)	Ethical guidance for actions and communication	Guide behavior toward non-harming and responsible conduct	Guide decisions about whether to continue watching, comment, respond, or share AI-generated content responsibly	Is my action ethical and non-harmful?
Integrated Practice	Awareness + clear comprehension + ethical guidance	Support conscious and responsible action	Move from automatic scrolling toward mindful, reflective, and responsible digital-media consumption	Notice → Understand → Choose responsibly

***Note.** Developed by the author as a conceptual synthesis of sati, sampajañña, and sīla for digital-media engagement; the sequence is not a canonical Buddhist formula.*

Overall, *sati*, *sampajañña*, and *sīla* can be understood as complementary principles for mindful and responsible engagement with AI-generated short-form videos. *Sati* supports awareness of immediate experience; *sampajañña* extends that awareness through reflection on purpose, appropriateness, and consequences; and *sīla* provides ethical guidance for deciding how to act, particularly in relation to communication, sharing, and non-harming. Together, these principles support a movement from automatic media consumption toward greater awareness, reflection, and ethical decision-making. Table 2 expresses this integration through the author-developed sequence ‘Notice -> Understand -> Choose responsibly.’ The sequence is a conceptual synthesis for digital-media practice rather than a canonical Buddhist formula.

Conclusion

The development of AI-generated short videos has introduced new possibilities for digital-media production and consumption while intensifying existing questions about attention, habitual scrolling, credibility, and authenticity. The literature reviewed in this article suggests potential risks associated with intensive short-form video use, algorithmic recommendation, and AI-generated content, but these mechanisms should not be conflated. Evidence on short-form video use generally does not show that AI-generated videos alone cause attentional or cognitive difficulties, and research on AI-generated content indicates that users’ responses vary by source disclosure, perceived credibility, prior attitudes, and message context.

From a Buddhist perspective, *sati* (mindfulness), *sampajañña* (clear comprehension), *sīla* (ethical discipline), and *sammā-vācā* (right speech) provide complementary principles for responding to these challenges. *Sati* supports awareness of media-use behavior, *sampajañña* encourages reflection on purpose and consequences, and *sīla* and *sammā-vācā* guide responsible communication and action. Together, these principles may support more deliberate, reflective, and ethically responsible engagement with AI-generated short-form videos. The principal contribution of this approach is therefore not to reject AI-mediated media, but to integrate awareness, clear comprehension, and ethical discernment so that users can engage with emerging forms of digital content without surrendering reflective judgment.

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