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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/iree](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/iree)Periscoping economics through someone else's eyes: A real world (Twitter) app<sup>☆</sup>Chelsea T. Dowell<sup>a,\*</sup>, Daniel F. Duncan<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Upper Iowa University, School of Business, 605 Washington St., P.O. Box 1857, Fayette, IA 52142, United States<sup>b</sup> University of Kentucky, Gatton College of Business & Economics, Department of Economics, Lexington, KY 40506, United States

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## ABSTRACT

Students and instructors alike are constantly seeking out real world examples of economic concepts. Current college students use their phone as extensions of themselves. While many students and instructors utilize Twitter, Periscope – an application (app) owned by Twitter – has not yet been capitalized on in the economics classroom. Periscope allows Twitter members to live stream video footage of their current location and to have text conversations between members. Periscope creates a unique opportunity for students to see life in other countries in real time while communicating with individuals abroad. We present an assignment that incorporates the use of Periscope as a means of analyzing and forecasting GDP and standard of living for countries across the globe.

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## 1. Introduction

The new Twitter application (app) Periscope allows members to live videoblog their surroundings. Students are able to experience an unfiltered view of the world at the touch of a button. As instructors continue to search for active learning assignments, Periscope offers a unique chance to study and interact with people from different countries while examining a foreign landscape. This paper outlines an active learning assignment utilizing Periscope in the economics classroom and offers advice for seamless integration into course curriculum.

The Periscope assignment has many advantages. It is well suited to meet the needs of the current generation. Periscope engages Millennials based on their specific characteristics. Millennials make up the majority of the traditional university students and they have specific learning needs based on the cultural trends they were exposed to in their adolescence (Roehl et al., 2013). For example, Millennials experienced trends of multiculturalism, terrorism, patriotism, and globalism (Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil, 2004 ; Wilson and Gerber, 2008). The Periscope app is an additional tool to meet Millennial-specific needs. Millennials are digital natives and prefer using technology with electronic communication and interaction (Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil, 2004). Periscope is a new technological application that incorporates electronic communication between viewers and broadcasters. Millennials prefer to be entertained during their learning experiences (Jonas-Dwyer and

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Pospisil, 2004; Wilson and Gerber, 2008). Operating the technology firsthand, viewing authentic live video, and potentially influencing their experience through direct communication with the broadcasters are all entertaining “experiential and authentic learning activities” (Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil, 2004). Millennials tend to be inclusive and team-oriented (Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil, 2004 ; Wilson and Gerber, 2008). The Periscope assignment is structured as group work, but the interaction between viewers and broadcasters creates another layer of group activity. Periscope better meets the needs of Millennials in the classroom.

Periscope is a new active learning example that improves student learning outcomes in the economics classroom. Traditional “chalk and talk” lectures are being transformed by active learning examples (Al-Bahrani et al., 2016b; Becker et al., 2006). Periscope offers students the chance to physically self-guide their learning experience. Students purposefully choose the broadcasters, manually operate the technological device, and individually interview the broadcasters. Active learning opportunities are proven to increase student learning outcomes (Buckles et al., 2012; Miller and Rebelein, 2012). Utilizing Periscope as an active learning opportunity may improve student learning outcomes.

Periscope adds another real world example for students to increase their understanding of the macroeconomic curriculum. Real world examples in the classroom also improve student learning outcomes (Govekar and Rishi, 2007). Students are able to view the real world application of GDP and its relationship to standard of living and quality of life using Twitter’s Periscope app. Students watch and interact live with unedited footage of the day-to-day activities in various countries. Students use Periscope to analyze the real world.

## 2. Periscope – the Twitter app

Twitter is a “popular microblogging platform” (Dhir et al., 2013). A blog is “a live journal or application which can be updated immediately without any problems” (Curran and Marshall, 2011). Periscope is “a mobile app that lets users broadcast live to others” (Shontell, 2015). The app was acquired by Twitter, a social networking company, for about \$100 million in February of 2015 after only being founded in February 2014 (Koh and Rusli, 2015; Shontell, 2015). The app enables users to “discover the world through someone else’s eyes” according to Periscope’s homepage (Twitter Inc., 2015).

There are two major categories of people who utilize Periscope: broadcasters and viewers. A broadcaster is an individual live videostreaming his/her current activities. A viewer is an individual watching these activities on his/her device. A viewer has the ability to text the broadcaster comments and questions in real time. The broadcaster can read the comments and verbally respond through his/her live videostream. (Shontell, 2015)

The unique live videostreaming feature allows viewers an unedited, honest, authentic view of the world (Pitti, 2015). In addition to the videostreaming, the app has the option for in-time texting between viewers and broadcasters (Shontell, 2015). As such, viewers have the potential to influence the broadcasters’ choices and actively engage in what they are watching. Furthermore, Periscope is known for being user-friendly. “The mechanics of Periscope are really simple: tap a button, and start streaming whatever your camera lens sees” (Pierce, 2015). Easy usage means that more than just the most technologically literate will be able to utilize the app, which creates a more diverse broadcasting population. Using the connection to the Twitter population, Periscope sends notifications to Twitter followers when the people they are following are broadcasting and vice versa (Pierce, 2015). Ultimately, Periscope offers the opportunity to have an unfiltered walk in someone else’s shoes.

Periscope is not the only live-streaming app on the market. Prior to 2014, Meerkat was the only live streaming app available through Twitter; however, Meerkat’s popularity caused Twitter, Inc. to make the shrewd business decision to buy its own live streaming app as seen in Periscope (Schaffer, 2015). Since Twitter’s purchase, Periscope has gained 10 times the popularity of Meerkat (Schaffer, 2015). While Meerkat is the most commonly noted competitor, others also exist in the form of Ustream, Facebook Live, YouNow, Blab, Livestream, Twitch, Streamup, Hang w/, Streamwire, Nom, Snapchat Live Stories, YouTube Connect, and Google Plus Hangouts on Air (Morrison, 2015; Schaffer, 2015; Ueland, 2016). Much of Periscope’s popularity and success is due to its Twitter association, but Periscope also allows viewers to stream broadcasts from the last 24 h, offers broadcasters some analytical information about their broadcasts, and gives viewers the opportunity to express their encouragement for broadcasters by sending them digital hearts (Schaffer, 2015; Ueland, 2016). These benefits give Periscope an edge in the marketplace over their many competitors. The live-streaming competitors are possible substitutes for Periscope in this assignment. Periscope was chosen above the others due to its popularity and thereby potential familiarity to students.

## 3. Literature review

Twitter is one form of social media that has found its way into the classroom in various manners. While some instructors have found Twitter to be a more successful tool for communicating with today’s students than the traditional Learning Management Systems (LMSs) (Al-Bahrani et al., 2015; Junco et al., 2010; Patel et al., 2015), others have introduced Twitter as assignments (Al-Bahrani and Patel 2015). The assignments assess everything from writing concisely for an audience (Dhir et al., 2013; Dunlap and Lowenthal 2009a; Dunlap and Lowenthal 2009b) to practicing English as a second language with “communicative and cultural competence” (Borau et al., 2009) to thinking critically about the mission of nonprofit organizations (Crews and Stitt-Gohdes, 2012). Twitter is easily adapted for the instructor’s specific purpose and can thereby

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