The Impact Of Douyin (Chinese TikTok) On The Socialization Of Chinese Youth

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Abstract. The more efficient network transmission rate and increasingly popular hardware technology brought by 5G technology have driven the rapid development of online HD short videos. As one of the most popular online short video mediums in China, Douyin, its international version known as TikTok, has a large youth user base, and its influence on youth growth has attracted widespread attention from families, society, and academia. Therefore, it is important to study the influence of Douyin on youth socialization and propose a media environment that is conducive to building a healthy socialization environment for youth.

1 INTRODUCTION

China's economy has soared in recent years, and the Internet has advanced quickly. According to the white paper "Chinese Youth in a New Era," China will have 180 million Internet users between the ages of 6 and 18 by the end of 2020, and the percentage of children who use the Internet will have reached 94.9%. There is a vast base of Internet users as well as the developed low latency 5G technology that has given birth to online short video media like Douyin. Douyin, one of the most well-known short-video social media platforms in China, was formally launched in 2016 and received 45.8 million downloads from the Apple App Store in 2018, exceeding other famous apps like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

The United Nations defines "Youth" as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, and users aged 18-23 account for 22% of the total users of Douyin, as a short video media with a large number of youth users. As a short video platform with a sizable youth user base, Douyin offers a wealth of engaging material for young people, including news, movies, animation, celebrity entertainment, technology, animals, music, dance, and more. For Chinese youth, it has grown into a significant media outlet that helps them expand their horizons, have fun, interact with others on a regular basis, and define their social responsibilities. It also subtly affects how they interact with others. Traditional socialization is a slow, gradual and orderly process, relying on intergenerational transmission and influence through language, text, body and expressions [1]. In contrast, social media such as Douyin accelerates the process of youth socialization and shortens the time of socialization.

Youth socialization is a process in which individuals shed their infancy and mature development and continuously adapt to social rules. American scholar S. Koenig defines socialization from the perspective of social norms. He holds that socialization is the process by which people grow up to be a member of the community from which they originate, and that every action a person takes should be in accordance with the civic and moral norms of that society. Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist of the structural-functionalist school, sees socialization as a process of role learning [2]. Adolescents' socialization is impacted by their cultural surroundings, families, schools, the media, and their peer groups, with internet media having a growing influence on the media. Bozeman claims that the "childhood vanishing" phenomena has been going on since the 1970s. From early childhood until maturity, the media has been influencing how individuals think and act, and to some extent, how they see many things. This study takes Douyin as an example, and analyzes the main issue posed by China short-video social media for young people, focusing on the positive and negative effects of Douyin on the socialization of youth based on the large number of youth users of Douyin and the fact that Douyin has a significant impact on youth growth. We hope that the discussion in this paper will make the society pay more attention to the influence of Douyin on the growth of youth and help create a good media environment.

2 THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF DOUYIN ON YOUTH SOCIALIZATION

2.1 Enriching the way of learning for youth

Youth no longer prefer the old one-way passive information-gathering methods including classroom instruction, instructional films, and textbook reading. The rise of Douyin has improved the methods that young people study. The videos on Douyin cover a wide range of topics, including astronomy, geography, gaming, music, movies, food, and more, so young people can always find

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something interesting to watch there. Additionally, there are bloggers who live all over the world in Douyin; their films allow you to learn about regional traditions and people without traveling, substantially expanding your horizons. Moreover, 15 seconds-1-minute-long videos with popular music and extra voice introduction, this way of spreading information makes youth more interested in learning than traditional teaching, thus turning passivity into initiative. According to the statistics, 44.3% of young people learn new knowledge on Douyin, and interest becomes the biggest reason for them to learn on Douyin. (Data source: Ocean engine – Douyin Youth Research (N=6171), June 2022)
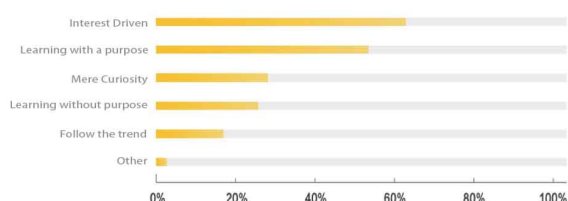

Fig. 1. Motivation of young groups to learn in Douyin

At the same time, in this kind of short video, the content presented is short and precise, hitting the key points directly, which is easier for youth to remember deeply.

2.2 Enriching youth's social style

The centrality of social networks in the adolescent environment may also accelerate over time. As specific platforms gain influence among adolescent peer groups, social networks become more significant for daily interactions. Social networks are not only modalities that facilitate interactions with unfamiliar peers but also essential tools for intensifying connections to the existing peer group [3]. The 2022 Douyin Youth Observation Report demonstrates the tremendous desire for sharing among young people. The Douyin youth group's members frequently post the pictures and videos they shoot on social media. They are not afraid to express themselves, record their lives on social platforms and create quality content, thus establishing their persona on the network and initially building their social status.

Fig. 2. Frequency of sharing pictures and videos on the social platform by young people on Douyin

Douyin has enriched the way of self-expression and socialization for youth. Youth have more methods to engage with friends and strangers because to Douyin's variety of interaction options, including likes, retweets, comments, private messages, collaborative movies, etc. At the same time, Douyin video shooting threshold is very low, no complicated technical operation, you can make the

video more interesting through Douyin's own video effects, music, and Douyin's parent company, Toutiao, has also developed a software for Douyin video editing cutting, so that you can complete the video editing through the mobile App. The interesting video content is pushed to interest users through Douyin's algorithm, which helps to form a social circle with unique attributes, satisfying young people's social and sharing desires.

2.3 Accelerating the socialization of youth politics

As social media today are a key method by which young people engage with political activism [4]. Douyin is also raising the attention of Chinese youth to political and state authorities. The administration and evaluation of China's new government media began in 2019, and for the first time, new government media have been included in a quantitative assessment of government activity. State Council, National Development and Reform Commission, State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport, public security agencies, and others have offices in Douyin. The presence of government agencies in Douyin can shorten the distance between government departments and youth, enhance the status of the network, help youth understand the latest government information, grasp national political trends, learn political knowledge, form political attitudes and build political personalities, while youth can also interact with these agencies through Douyin and communicate directly between the two sides.

Besides, Douyin as an entertaining short video media, government civil servants have formed an IP phenomenon in Douyin. By way of illustration, the "Diplomatic Troupe," a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has amassed a large following of young fans on Douyin because to its impressive appearance. Many of these young fans have created movies of the "Diplomatic Troupe" and published them there. A number of young admirers have created films of the "Diplomatic Troupe" and posted them on Douyin, drawing a fanbase. The development of the "Diplomatic Troupe" has altered the traditional media's serious and stereotypical portrayal of government employees. On Douyin, they now have a more personable charisma that may persuade some youth to pay attention to foreign policy and increase their favorability to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3 NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DOUYIN ON YOUTH SO-CIALIZATION

3.1 False information misguides youth's value judgment

Although Douyin serves as a channel for youth to get the latest information, Douyin is also a platform created by individuals, filled with a large number of third-party personal accounts, and the information released by the authors lacks the guaranteed mechanism of news authenticity supervision and screening [5], and some short

video authors release false information to earn traffic, which triggers public opinion.

Li Min, vice president of Didi, questioned the Douyin short film authors for defaming Douyin drivers in a post on her personal microblog in May 2021. In her example, the texts of these short video authors making up stories were all almost identical. The creator's name is concealed on Douyin, but the conversation can be amplified to the maximum. These short film creators create false stories about Douyin and stir up social mood to attack a group's beliefs just to gain viewers.

3.2 Youth produce irrational herding behavior

Many young people exhibit a pretty strong herding mentality at this period, which is influenced by how each person has been socialized. Information herding and rule herding, according to researchers, are two types of herding. Rule-following is a way to gain social approval, to establish good social relationships by forming friendly alliances with others, and to some extent, to pursue a sense of group identity and belonging, fearing rejection by the group as an alien (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955) [6]. Adolescents tend to be more affected by their classmates and adopt a herd mentality as a result. It is clear that herd mentality influences how teenagers view their own values and behavioral inclinations. Compared with traditional formal education, the potential herd mentality will have a relatively stronger impact on many teenagers, and the creators of short videos on Douyin come from different backgrounds in various industries. Some Douyin weblebrities broadcast everyday life films on the site that are filled with fancy automobiles, designer goods, upscale resorts, and other things in an effort to attract attention. Youth are prone to blind imitation when brushing Douyin videos, and are proud of such following, all kinds of unskilled following, imitating what segments, teasing children, family members The phenomenon is endless, as well as the phenomenon of elementary school students learning to wear heavy makeup and pretend to be mature. The user's tastes will be determined by Douyin's big data algorithm, which will intensify the pushing of such filthy movies. When kids are exposed to low-quality videos with terrible sexual values, they are likely to copy or have their lives and worldviews influenced. [7].

3.3 Douyin algorithm creates information cocoon

In "Information Cocoons", Robert Walmsley University Professor Cass R. Sunstein pointed out that when people are confronted with a plethora of information online, they tend to pay attention to what they want to see, and the algorism will select their preferred information to them, eventually narrowing their field of vision, much like a silkworm making a cocoon for itself[8].

"User-centered design" is the core of Douyin's prototype. Simply put, Douyin will only recommend content that the current user likes, and will continue to track and reinforce this user preference from the cold start of the app. If you tap on a skiing video, the system will

initially customize your preferences to sports, and then continue to track your behavior for further analysis, eventually providing you with highly tailored and accurate recommendations.
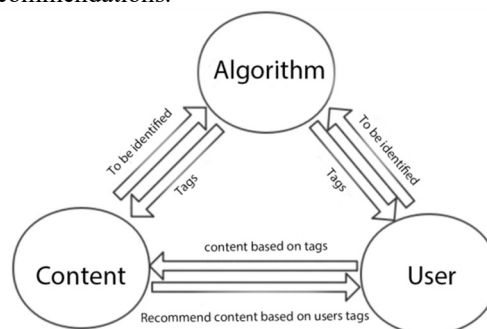

Fig. 3. Douyin algorithm prototype,

Source: Short Video Popular Research Institute

Although this algorithm can increase the viscosity of users to the platform, the convergence of content to a certain extent exacerbates the formation of the information cocoon, limiting the breadth of adolescents' horizon and knowledge. Being caught in the information cocoon also tends to give adolescents a one-sided view of things, which can gradually aggravate, making adolescents blindly believe and follow, which is eventually difficult to correct and seriously hinders the normal socialization process of individuals [9].

4 MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DOUYIN ON YOUTH

4.1 Strengthen the audit of the authenticity of the information content on Douyin and the punishment

Douyin has established a comprehensive procedure for rumor detection, identification, and countering mechanisms, established a "rumor prevention zone," and established close ties with authoritative organizations and inventors in many fields of expertise to carry out rumor prevention activities. The establishment of a "rumor database" for automatic machine review, new warning labels for suspected rumors, big data and artificial intelligence for "accurate disinformation". However, despite these measures, there are still many authors on Douyin who publish false, vulgar and other content that distort the values of youth. In terms of safety mechanism for youth using Douyin, Douyin also launched Douyin teenager mode, the default length of use is 40 minutes; unable to publish content, watch and open live; unable to use private messages, comments, recharge reward function; the same city and hot search portal is closed, the content is selected by the platform, and only selected content can be searched. Although this addresses the issue of adolescents being misled by material, it also lessens young usage of Douyin and diminishes Douyin's contribution to the development of youth social skills,

making it a short-term fix. Douyin needs to join hands with government agencies to impose strong legal punishment on authors who publish bad content, and invest more supervisors to increase the review and punishment. The review and punishment efforts, rather than just be video deletion, blocking and other treatment. The law should be passed to regulate the online environment of Douyin.

4.2 Families strengthen the socialization guidance for youth

Parents should make clear what bad impacts the Douyin environment would bring to youngsters in order to favorably lead them, even if the media progressively outweighs family as the key influential force in juvenile socialization. According to social learning theory, youth's important life decisions, such as school and career choices, are linked to the influence of parental role models [10]. According to the social learning hypothesis, learning and observation might have an impact on teenage personality development. Instead of allowing children to get excessively hooked to the Internet, parents should pay greater attention to the social realities of children's lives, offer advice on the right values in all facets of everyday life, and set an example for children to follow.

5 CONCLUSION

According to Herbert Marshall McLuhan, "the scale and form of interpersonal interactions and actions" are shaped and controlled by the media. Douyin, as one of the most popular social media for Chinese youth, plays a role in advancing youth socialization, opening up their horizons and allowing them to establish their social status more easily. Youth may access a broad range of material from Douyin that does not just depend on teens' online conduct as they develop their online social skills. Back in real life, the immediate and effective information resources obtained in cyberspace are reflected in youth daily family life, school studies, and peer relationships [11]. However, this effect is not all favorable; it also poses certain obstacles to young people's socialization. As a result, society, families, and schools should pay attention to this and enhance the control over Douyin public opinion while also supporting actual socialization guidance.

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