Comparative Analysis of Video Stories and User Behaviors on WeChat and Tik Tok

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of the modern technologies, the new media has becoming more and more significant in the people's lives. Among them, short video is a kind of internet content transmission method that rises in recent years. The purpose of this study is to discovery the ways of video story-telling and explore their impact on users' online and offline behavior by analyzing the narrative methods of short videos of WeChat and Tik Tok, two well-known new media platforms in China, and compare their user behavior patterns. This paper mainly uses the method of investigation, observation and literature research.

Keywords: *Internet content transmission; short video software; video story-telling; WeChat and TikTok; user' behavior*

1. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, shortvideos have become increasingly important to Chinese and global internet communities. From Snapchat, which debuted in 2011, to Tik Tok, which surfaced in 2016, to the "Channels" developed by instant messaging app WeChat in 2020, Short video softwares are becoming increasingly global and diversified. This paper will take the newly opened "Channels" of short video software Tik Tok and instant messaging software WeChat as examples to discuss thenarrative methods of operation interface and development modes of these two short video software as well as analyzing their user behavior modes (both online and offline).

The questions discussed in this paper will focus on the following aspects: First of all, the two video clip software often use the narrative method.Secondly, whether the way these short video programs tell a story will influence the user's behavior pattern, and vice versa.In addition, through comparison, the similarities and differences between the narrative methods and user behavior patterns of these two apps are discussed.

According to the relevant literature, there are many previous studies on short video, TikTok and WeChat, but there is a lack of relevant comparative experiments and summary of rules. This research is of great significance for today's short video development and new media research field. Through the comparative analysis of these two software, it's easy to summarize the development law of short video and their impact on users, find out some of their existing problems and put forward suggestions for improvement.

According to the 45th Statistical Report on the Development of The Internet in China, by March 2020, the number of short video users in China was 773 million, accounting for 85.6 percent of the total number of Internet users.[1]

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. The Videos Story-telling on Wechat and The User Behaviors

2.1.1. WeChat and "channels" development overview

WeChat is a free application that provides instant messaging services for smart terminals launched by Tencent on January 21, 2011.WeChat supports across different communication operators, operating system platform through the network fast send free (need to consume a small amount of network traffic) voice messaging, video, images and text. At the same time, the users also can use the information through Shared streaming media content and location based social plugins "shake", "bottle", "moments", "public account", "public speech notepad" services, etc.

Tencent officially announced that WeChat's "Channels" would began internal testing on January 22, 2020.WeChat's "Channels" is a brand new platform for recording and creating content, as well as a window for understanding others and the world. It's on the WeChat's "discovery page", just below the "moments" entry. The pictures and videos are the mainly content in the "Channels", which can be released in less than a minute of video or not more than 9 pictures, and it can also take the text and public article links, which do not need the

PC background. Moreover, it can be published directly on the phone. The "Channels" supports the function of thumbing up, comments for interaction, and the content can also be forwarded to the"moments" and the chat scene, so as to share with friends.

2.1.2. Layout of the "channels"

The "Channels" entry is below the "Moments" entry. After clicking on it, users can see their "Following", what their "Friends love", and what's "Hot". The average length of a video is 15 seconds. Switching video takes the form of sliding up and down.

The user can see a list of comments below each video. The comment list clearly shows the number of comments, the content of the comments, and the number of thumbing up and replies per comment. But the replies below each comment can't be thumbed up and replied.

2.1.3. Analysis of the video story-telling and the user behavior

2.1.3.1 Video story-telling

The "Channel" is the latest short video portal set up by WeChat, and the videos in it also have to go through a series of strict screening mechanisms. Publishers are forbidden to publish information with advertisement color in the video, such as scanning qr code and adding account.

The content of the video shall be prohibited to contain copyright trademarks and other right marks with infringement risks; It is forbidden to post content in the identity of others; No copying other people's work, etc. Accounts that violate the above rules will be restricted or blocked.

There are also strict rules for comments on video Numbers: frequent comments on the videos, create thumbing up for others within a short period of time, or illegal comments will be banned for 7 days, when the offenders will be unable to comment and thumb up, and repeated violations will be restricted, reduced or banned.

After WeChat adopted this series of stringent measures, the content of the video number that users have been able to see so far has been filtered through layers and layers. Most of them are influential celebrities and big media with high popularity and authority. There are also some certified photo bloggers, music bloggers and so on.

Celebrities usually post some clips of their daily life and wonderful moments on the stage, unconsciously narrowing the distance between them and the audience; News clips released by the official authoritative media are also authentic and authoritative; Most of the clips posted by photo bloggers and music bloggers are also representative works and serve as a kind of "seasoning".

Therefore, it's easy to conclude that one of the biggest characteristics of story-telling in WeChat short videos is

authenticity. Compared to other popular short video apps, WeChat short video doesn't put a lot of effort into storytelling or " make up" a story. On the contrary, these short videos are dedicated to telling real stories, all of which come from life.

2.1.3.2 User behaviors

WeChat has more than 1 billion users registered so far. According to the WeChat CEO Zhang Xiaolong released in early July, the number of video users has exceeded 200 million. Monthly active users also exceeded 1.1 billion, according to WeChat's 2019 WeChat data report released in 2019.That means that of those 1.1 billion people, at least 200 million or more will be able to become video users and watch short videos.[2]

The narrative style of these short videos has unwittingly influenced the behavior of these 200 million users.

According to the layout of the video number and the notification display, each of us will have our thumb up's seen by the rest of our circle of friends.This means that WeChat displays its "connectedness" and makes everyone in the circle of friends' behaviors open and transparent, which may cause users to hesitate during the use of the video: If I showed this video to someone else, would it have an impact on my own life, and what would people think of me. Therefore, the first possible effect on users is that they have concerns about thumbing up and forwarding videos.

The second is the impact on the user's comment behavior.Unlike other popular apps, WeChat has tweaked its comments on short videos to make them visible to everyone. Therefore, when making comments, most people are likely to be conservative: Firstly, they will be seen by other friends; Secondly, they have a strict comment mechanism, fearing that their teasing is too sharp and will be banned. Undoubtedly, these factors also limit users' comments on videos, but to some extent they also regulate users' comments and maintain a healthy and safe online public opinion environment.

The third impact is to give users a good experience with their content. Users are not allowed to shoot commercial videos, nor are they allowed to imitate other people's accounts. WeChat also selects these short video contents according to the recommendation algorithm mechanism of acquaintances rather than machine algorithm, so most of the contents are related to friends, that is to say, the works that most people like.

At the same time, as mentioned above, WeChat has higher requirements for the release of short videos, and prohibits some commercial and vulgar entertainment behaviors.So most of what users see are works that have been carefully filtered and censored for publication.Even though most of today's short videos are storytelling, WeChat's censorship system shows the truth of these stories.

Therefore, the "channel" of WeChat can be preliminarily found from the above aspects., as a short video application that has just entered the market and gained

more than 200 million users, is closely related to users' online behavior experience from several aspects such as storytelling methods and system.

2.2. The Videos Story-telling on Tik Tok and the User Behaviors

2.2.1 Tik Tok development overview

Tik Tok short video is a music creative short video social software, incubated by Toutiao, which was launched on September 20, 2016. It is a music short video community platform for all ages.Users can select songs and shoot short music videos through this software to form their own works, and update their favorite videos according to their hobbies.

According to the Report on Users' portraits of Tik Tok in 2020 released in March this year, Tik Tok's DAU (number of daily active users) exceeded 400 million, up 60 percent from 250 million in the same period last year; The spring report on China's Mobile Internet in 2020, released this spring, shows that Tik Tok has 518 million users, with female users accounting for 57 percent.[3]

2.2.2. Layout of the Tik Tok

Tik Tok interface is very simple. There are two main interfaces -- Following and For You.

The first thing a user will see is For You, the popular video that the system recommends to the user according to the machine algorithm. Most of these videos are random. If the user is not interested in the video content, they can slide down with their hands. They'll never guess what the next video will be.[4]

The comment list is on the right side of each video. Click through to the comments list and we'll see some of the biggest thumb up comments first (unlike the comments on WeChat videos, these are more to the point). The users also reply and discuss in the comments below.Interestingly, the reply below each comment can also be made by liked and reply.

2.2.3. Analysis of the video story-telling and user behavior

2.2.3.1 Video story-telling

Tik Tok video coverage is very wide. Live-action videos were the most popular of all video categories, with 32.5% of users interested, according to a survey of user interest. In this kind of live-action video, "sitcoms" and "live-action storytelling" account for a large part. This is also the main form of Tik Tok story-telling. The sitcoms of Tik Tok, as the name suggests, is a short video platform based on the form of shooting TV series, designing the script and dialogue of

characters and arranging the actors to appear on the screen. Most sitcoms are about scenes from life.[5]

Nowadays, Tik Tok has many independent shooting teams. In order to gain traffic and exposure rate, they will try their best to choose some subjects that young people are interested in (most of Tik Tok users are young people), such as photographing work life, couples' daily life and people's most concerned safety issues.

Clear story content, strict narrative logic, excellent line expression and focus on the creation of suspense are essential elements. In the age of short videos, every second is precious. Viewers won't waste too much time in a particularly long video or a particularly complicated plot. Therefore, in the few seconds to several minutes of the video, in order to attract the audience's attention, the beginning must be done very well, so that the audience will have the desire to watch.

Here are some tactics to get you started: a catchy title, some good looking actors, and a catchy start to the story.At the same time, music is also a very important element in Tik Tok short videos. These pieces of music are the same length as the video, and usually use the climax of a song. The music not only enhances the atmosphere and resonates with the audience, but also promotes the audience's visual imagination.

It is worth mentioning that on Tik Tok platform, everyone can be an audience, and everyone can also be a storyteller. Because the threshold is low, the creative freedom is high, the video material is easy to imitate, therefore also enhances the audience to tell the story enthusiasm. If you're not careful, your video could go viral, gaining tens or even hundreds of thousands of views. So, to some extent, it satisfies people's vanity to be found and to have a thumb up.

2.2.3.2 User behaviors

To date, Tik Tok has more than 400 million daily active users.This huge amount of data shows that the way Tik Tok short videos tell stories is very successful, and it is also quietly influencing users' behavior and daily life. Tik Tok's development has also had a huge impact on users. At first, the richness of Tik Tok short video materials have enriched users' daily life. For most users, an hour on Tik Tok is as short as a minute. Because of the large amount of video material and the randomness of video recommendation, users will unconsciously enjoy the pleasure of sliding content.

Secondly, it meets people's social needs: through Tik Tok's comments, people are free to express their unique opinions in the comment area and discuss under each comment. Sometimes, "Comments are better than the video itself", and they always unconsciously read the comments after scrolling through the video. At the same time, by sharing with others, you can also invisibly deepen the connection with others.

Thirdly, the emergence of Tik Tok short videos also caters to the needs of the audience in the era of fragmented reading. With the pace of life accelerating,

people are no longer willing to spend time watching long videos. The video is fast paced, plot is attractive, and users will not feel very boring, so they are always willing to watch some wonderful content with a short time cost.

2.3. The Comparison between Wechat and TikTok And The Impact on the User Behaviors

2.3.1 Video comparison between Wechat and Tik Tok

These two representative short video apps are also worth comparing. First, they have something in common. Both are products of the short video era, and their story content duration is well controlled and concise. Video is becoming more and more refined in terms of picture quality, sound effect and program effect. In order to give the audience a good experience and obtain the flow; Both are social and satisfy people's social desire.

At the same time, the difference between them is worth discussing. The first is the different nature of the story. WeChat short video story is more of the pursuit of "authenticity", rather than exaggerated techniques and magic plot, it emphasizes the truth, and does not allow any advertising and commercial color to mix; But the story of Tik Tok short video emphasizes the program effect more. Tik Tok features a large number of sitcoms, with actors playing different roles and designing dialogue and scripts to appeal to the audience.

Secondly, the main body of the video is different. WeChat's storytellers are more likely to be accredited, credible and authoritative, such as stars or well-known authors; Tik Tok has a low threshold for publishing stories, as long as it's legal and meets the requirements, anyone can pick up their phone to shoot the story.

Another is the different criteria by which videos are recommended to users. According to the WeChat social algorithm, most of what people see is what their friends like; Tik Tok will automatically recommend popular and frequently viewed content to users according to the machine algorithm. The former content recommendation is relatively fixed, while the latter is very random.

2.3.2 User behaviors comparison between Wechat and Tik Tok

The two apps have something in common. As a product of the short video era, the video duration is also very short, and each video only takes users a very short time to browse. That is to say, both of them meet the requirements of video length in the era of fragmented reading; The main function of both short videos is leisure, and most users only watch them in their spare time; Video content is rich and varied, but also plays a role in expanding horizons and increasing knowledge.

Obviously, they also have obvious differences. WeChat is essentially a social software, and the establishment of moments, public accounts, channels and so on only plays an auxiliary role, and the design of video Numbers is mainly based on social connection. Users will unconsciously think about the impact on their reality when watching content, and will consider the people in their social circle as a factor. The limitation of video content and comments also reduces the space for users to discuss freely to some extent.[6]

Tik Tok is the opposite. As a pure entertainment software, it recommends a variety of content. Three things users can do: watch videos, watch comments, and forward them to others. Comments allow responses. This also acquiesces the space for users to discuss freely, but also increases the probability of invalid information to some extent.

3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this paper analyzes the characteristics of WeChat's "Channels" and chatter short videos and their influence on users, and compares them. Through analysis, the problems mentioned in the previous introduction are also concluded: Firstly, the two storytelling techniques are similar, with some design in terms of length, video production and sound effect; Secondly, the storytelling of these short videos also influences the behavior patterns of users, and vice versa. At last, there are similarities between the two, including the control of the length of the video and the richness of the story, but they are different in essence and have different influences on users. As the product of short video era, these two software have representative and research value. In the future, they need to constantly improve, adapt to the requirements of The Times, in order to better serve users.

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