

The Self-identity in Rural Theme Short Video in KuaiShou Platform

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ABSTRACT

The rise of mobile short video media platforms has expanded communication rights and is no longer exclusive to some groups. The Kuaishou, as a representative of the short video platform, has been embedded in the daily life of rural themes' creators. Starting from the creator of the rural theme, this text analyzes the geography, consumer culture, and identity of a rural short video. It studies the symbolic meaning contained in short videos and constructs rural creators' self-identity.

Keywords: Rural Creators, geographical identity, consumer culture, subjective identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of new media technology and the rising demand for spiritual entertainment, various short video platforms have emerged as the times require, striving to bring better spiritual comfort to the public. As one of China's largest short video platforms, Kuaishou has been deeply cultivating rural videos, which also brings greater communication rights to backward rural areas and provides local creators with the opportunity to write and show their own lives. In the works of creators in rural areas, the audience can easily detect their self-identity. The so-called identity, Deaux holds that identity is the cognition of a person for which group he/she belongs to, which is an extremely important aspect of self-concept. This identity is universal, and almost all creators are guided by self-identity to produce video content, which is the inspiration source of their creation. This identity has a wider universality in the post-modern consumption era, and the audience constantly consumes this identity in many videos. Through this kind of identity, the purpose of connecting themselves with the spiritual hometown can be realized. In this paper, the characteristics and influence of the identity of rural video creators will be discussed from many aspects.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTITY IN RURAL SHORT VIDEO

With the continuous development of short video platforms, more and more people take them as leisure places to escape real life. Among them, short videos with rural themes are the most popular among viewers, represented by excellent creators such as Li Ziqi. With their relaxed and simple narration, vivid and interesting composition, and interpretation, rural short videos have attracted many viewers who are eager to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and return to their spiritual homeland. Most of these short videos focus on rural life, with many kinds and forms. However, they all have common characteristics. Namely, there is the symbol of spiritual homeland to a greater or lesser extent. The audience can naturally immerse themselves in them and obtain spiritual enjoyment beyond the material. However, this kind of video can show such an effect, which is closely related to the self-identity of creators, and the geographical identity plays an indispensable role in it.

2.1. The geographical characteristics in rural short videos

Geography refers to a geographical relationship, namely "A unique relationship between people who live in the same area for a long time due to the similarity or consistency between the natural environment (geography, ecology, climate, etc.) and the social environment (customs, institutions, religions, etc.)". [1] This relationship can also be reflected as the concept of homeland and the concept of villagers. Due to the agricultural background of China since ancient times, people's ideas are often associated with the countryside. The countryside has become the spiritual homeland of almost all the people in China. For creators, this recognition is the best soil for them to draw creative inspiration. When creating videos, creators mostly choose the content related to rural life, including the production of rural delicacies, the renovation of old houses in rural areas, and the display of rural scenery. In these videos, the geographical orientation can be easily detected. Red visual symbols representing "spicy" can often be seen in food videos in Sichuan and Chongqing, and elements of characteristic costumes can also be seen in videos in some ethnic minority areas... These regional symbols of taste, language, and costumes directly point out the geographical characteristics of videos. For consumers, such distinctive geographical features make them more willing to pay for these videos, which enable them to directly connect to their spiritual homeland. It is also this geographical identity that has established a perfect communication channel between video creators and consumers.

2.2. The special identity background-disembedded community

In modern society, the authors and audiences of short videos are suffering from the process of the disembedded community. Traditional Chinese rural areas are constantly disappearing in the current urbanization process, and a large number of rural laborers began to live or work in cities, which also results in the special background of the geographical identity-the phenomenon of disembedded community. Giddens first put forward this concept in the *Consequences of Modernity*, which explains the transformation of social relations in modern society. It is believed that disembedded community refers to the "separation" of social relations from the interactive regional relations and the relations reconstructed through the infinite crossing of uncertain time. Corresponding to these farmers entering the city, it can be popularly understood that the body lives in the city, but the spirit is still pinned on the countryside. To a certain extent, this also reflects that short videos with rural themes are the spiritual and emotional sustenance shared by creators and consumers. Creators use new media to process and beautify their hometown through reasonable imagination

of their hometown to appear in front of the audience in a better image. By watching this kind of video, the audience constantly maintains and strengthens their emotional links with their hometown to feel the warmth of their hometown even if they are in a different place. Under the special background of the disembedded community, this kind of short video on rural themes has become the perfect answer.

2.3. The role and geographical presentation of the Kuaishou platform

New media means have played an irreplaceable role in deepening and spreading geographical identity. First of all, the success of short videos on rural themes cannot be achieved without the help of short video platforms. Compared with the Douyin platform, which pays more attention to head users, the Kuaishou platform is more attentive to mass creators. The Kuaishou platform provides these creators with opportunities for self-expression and self-writing. Since the "Happy Village" strategy was launched in 2018, more and more rural creators have joined it. In addition, in the Kuaishou App, there is a video zone especially recommended according to the geographic location of users, which also makes the geographical identity continuously strengthened to a certain extent.

On the platform, geographical identity also has a relatively obvious presentation. The vast majority of creators like to name their accounts directly according to their geographical identities, such as "Northeast Xiaoxifu", "Miaojia Lingege", "Rural Sunlaotai", etc. Creators show their recognition of their geographical identities most directly in such a simple and straightforward way. Meanwhile, in the video's comment area, we can often see the benign interaction between fans and authors, fans and fans due to regional culture. New media means have played an irreplaceable role in deepening and spreading geographical identity.

It thus appears that under the special background of the times, the self-identity of the creator is also presented in a way with the characteristics of the times. No matter the content or form of the video conforms to the reading and consumption habits of the current audience and actively expands the key connection of geography in the society so that both consumers and creators can return to their spiritual homeland and gain spiritual comfort and enjoyment.

3. CONSUMER CULTURE IN RURAL SHORT VIDEO

The Kuaishou platform attracts some special audiences through geo-relation. At the same time, the Kuaishou short video platforms include a very important process from production to audience, that is, consumption. It also lets producers and audiences

identify their self-identity again. We are now in the era of post-modernism consumption, and the media has become the main form of consumption. Communication media is a very important consumption industry in the post-modernist era. However, the media is going into the era of new media now, so the media's focus has shifted to the new media area. On this basis, the Kuaishou platform has become one of the most popular consumption channels for the audience. The short videos also reshape the symbolic meaning and symbolic value in the context of consumer society while providing entertainment and recreation for users. In the category of short videos with rural themes, people are no longer limited to the use-value and exchange-value for the consumption of goods. Still, they pay more attention to the symbolic meaning behind them.

3.1. Aesthetic consumption attributes contained in rural short videos

Consumption has some changes into the aesthetic of daily life, which has become a new characteristic of consumption. Professor Mike Featherstone proposed that the aesthetic of daily life is eliminating the distance between art and life, transforming "life into art" and "art into life" at the same time. [2] With the development and progress of society, people have a higher pursuit of consumption with the abundance of material resources. This phenomenon also reflects in the shoot of rural short videos. Rural short videos are an important vertical flow entrance in the Kuaishou platform with a lot of fans. The short video of rural food is the largest branch which shows incisively and vividly in the aesthetic of daily life. Among them, the videos shot by rural food bloggers represented by Li Ziqi have gone beyond the meaning of the existence of food itself. [3] They are more presenting an aesthetic way of life. In rural food videos, the producers use the environment, utensils, natural scenery, ingredients, exquisite composition, and so on to let food cooking become a kind of enjoyment of slow life that changes the satiety of things into the carrier of aesthetic lifestyle. In the production and dissemination of short food videos, food is shaped into a symbolic existence that symbolizes quality life and entertainment experience, thus creating a concrete imagination space for users about a beautiful life picture. In this process, short food videos have become the object of public cultural consumption and a symbol of cultural consumption.

3.2. Application and embodiment of functional consumption in rural short videos

Rural short videos satisfy the aesthetic and audience's appreciation of the content and know the realization of value by transforming the production of content into the consumption field according to the needs of the times. In this process, rural short videos also reconstruct functional consumption using media. Functional consumption is

defined as the application in the specific process of production exchange, material exchange, or money exchange to meet the basic consumption needs of consumers. At the same time, consumers just can satisfy the minimum needs them. [4] This era is known as the "functional consumption era". Nowadays, people are more emphasized in spirit consumption, but functional consumption is still the primary condition. However, in the post-modernist consumption era, functional consumption has been upgraded and transformed in the media. The phenomenon of "online celebrity to take goods" appears in the use of short video platforms. Even in rural short videos, producers rely on their popularity to sell goods through platforms, transforming traditional consumption into media consumption. Producers catch the character of media spreading rapidly and using their huge fan bases to promote products that need to be sold. At the same time, they will further package. This kind of packaging refers to the transformation of a hard advertisement into a soft advertisement using micro-film or scene layout to attract an audience to buy imperceptibly. For example, Li Ziqi attracted the audience with its unique video style. Her sales breakthrough 150,000 within 3 days after the store was launched, and the sales volume exceeded 10 million [5] As mentioned above, the producers have created an aesthetic lifestyle and emphasized beauty in product packaging and slogans, and even in web design that combines functional consumption and aesthetic consumption to better go on post-modernism consumption.

3.3. The performance and narrative function of the body in the rural short video

Another style is "vulgar video," except aesthetics or changing to the consumer realm's video in the rural short video. Vulgar videos also occupy a large market in rural short videos, specifically referring to videos with a down-to-earth style and a rustic flavour. A famous vulgar vlogger in the Kuaishou, "vulgar video- Principal", has 72000 fans and continues growing.[6] In all kinds of vulgar videos, the performance of the body is the most important form. In history, the west has been significant research on the status of the body. In post-modern culture, the body has more existing forms, and the body performance in the video has become an iconic symbol. Postmodernism means the subversion and resistance to tradition and also means a kind of dismantling and deconstruction. In such a way, even rustic videos still have a huge audience. On the one hand, such videos can find an outlet to express themselves in the era of all-media; on the other hand. They can also attract a large amount of traffic through curiosity seeking. In addition, some scholars discuss the influence of body narrative on identity. In vulgar videos, the narrative function of the body is ubiquitous, using cheap clothing to imitate classic characters in serving, forming a "vulgar" style of

narrative.[7] Photographers convey corresponding emotions or values through their work. This kind of "down-to-earth" body narrative has carried on a kind of fusion of culture between different fields. In the vulgar video, the narrative function of the body was given a new cultural meaning. It also becomes a kind of means and a tool and accords with the concept of post-modernism consumption.

4. THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FARMER'S SUBJECTIVE IDENTITY

In rural short videos of Kuaishou, whether creators or audiences, they both faced deconstructing and reconstructing the subject's identity. In this process, their behaviors about geography and consumption are all conducted to seek their origin of own identity, among which the most important thing cannot be ignored in constructing their subjective identity. For the Kuaishou platform, whether the creators take the initiative to show and criticized by the mainstream culture as 'countrified videos,' or new farmers breakthrough release short videos that fit the modern consumerist aesthetic, all production behaviors and consumer behaviors like these are the creators highlight the construction of subjectivity based on recognizing their own identity of a farmer, and carry on the deeper exploration with this as the focus.

4.1. Solving the identity crisis of the new farmers

As mentioned above, the creators of rural themes choose this kind of subject to achieve identity through the media. Still, they're disembedding and wandering under two kinds of state: rural and urban. It's difficult to achieve this goal. Their way of life, the concept of value, and mode of production have suffered the impact of the external environment. It's hard to find their position of emotion. This is the problem for such groups. The postmodern consumerism market is developing rapidly. Under such a background, the influencing factors that maintain rural social relations gradually shift from morality and blood relationship to production and benefit. This leads to a problem that both the rural creators and the urban audiences lack identity, so an identity crisis appeared.

In all rural short video creators, a special group appeared. They are called "new farmers" who can actively identify themselves as farmers. But in the language expression, the way of life is different from the traditional definition of a farmer. While presenting a beautiful rural and idyllic landscape, they add elements such as family love, food, and work into videos. They can effectively express their own (subject) ideas in the video. With higher cultural literacy and media literacy, the new farmers can lead more creators to show a kind of identity of subjectivity through the narration of body performance.

For many audiences, this kind of identification has viewing value and emotional resonance. Inspiring productions will attract more audiences to turn their eyes to short videos with rural themes conducive to solving the identity crisis.

4.2. Relying on the network media to achieve the constructive interactions between the subjects and object

Most rural theme creators (transmission) are changed by the original audience (object) identity. Transmitter and receiver are two interdependent subjects in the process of short video transmission. Now the creators are both the subjects and the objects. This is constantly switching, and communicating mode has affected the creators of their positioning. More and more creators regard themselves as "New Farmers" and make efforts to spread local culture and represent a rural image. For excellent creators, they analyze audience psychology from different perspectives. The boundary between subject and object will be gradually narrowed or even completely broken in the process of communication. And the object will be given with more subjective initiative. Creators can establish a relatively stable relationship with the audience by responding to the audience, Live sales with goods and other ways, formed "show- feedback - optimization - reproduction" Benign mode of operation. While innovating video content, explore more rural aesthetic elements that resonate with the audience. Amplifying their own initiative through the Kuaishou platform, instead of returning to the original "audience on demand" form, both transmitters and receivers can establish a sense of participation in this virtual community. In the end, the rural groups who found their own affiliation continued to expand.

4.3. The reconstruction of identity under discipline power

Network media development provides a display platform for rural short video creators. National policy is inclined to accelerate the change of thought. Farmers take the initiative to change from the identity of "aphasia" by the ideas such as delocalization, consumerism, etc. From the initial "unconscious" state to the present "subjectivity" cognition, more and more rural theme creators realize the importance of realizing their power. In this process, the power system is reconstructed. In this paper, the concept of "power" will refer to Michel Foucault's definition of "power". In most cases, the power is reflected in media supervision and audience response. Such discipline is similar to Foucault's "panopticon", which focuses on surveillance. The traditional network environment is indeed like one of them, but the Kuaishou platform provides an opportunity for all rural short video creators to realize their subjectivity. Under this background, every subject has

the opportunity to participate in this huge system and supervise each other. The low threshold inspired more creators to express their demands. They take "becoming a local cultural propagandist and rural spokesperson" as their goal and actively respond to the national rural revitalization strategy call. From top to bottom, this group interpreted local culture with the role of "creators". Then the power rating that originally existed in society is basically redefined in the network, and "empowerment" is accomplished through active participation, acceptance, and interaction. A power system with new farmers as the main body is reconstructed, to realize identity through this way beyond the traditional power discipline.

5. CONCLUSION

Even though there is a crisis of identity in postmodernism, in this process, the creators of rural short videos never forget their own identity, no matter in terms of geography, consumption, subjectivity, etc. They try to find the origin of identity for themselves and audiences in different ways. This is a successful attempt for them, through the use of the Kuaishou platform to encourage them to form self-awareness and complete reconstructing self-identity. This post-modernist identity will not only exist in such rural short videos in Kuaishou but also will be reflected in various platforms. With the development of communication media, they will be endowed with profound value and significance.

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