

An Analysis of Short Video Communication Phenomenon in Art Education — Taking RED as an Example

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ABSTRACT

With its rapid development, social media has become the primary source of information for contemporary young people. In China, where mandatory art education is relatively lacking, the characteristics of short videos, such as diversification, entertainment, and widespread dissemination, have brought significant breakthroughs to traditional art education. This article chooses the mainstream Chinese social media platform RED as a case study. Through case analysis, content analysis, questionnaire surveys, and other research methods based on Harold D.Lasswell's "5w" communication theory, the author conducted in-depth research on communication effects of art education videos. Analyzing the current situation of the dissemination of art education videos, the author will explore how to implement art education through short videos.

Keywords: Short Video, Art Education, Communication Effect

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information technology today, the Internet has become one, if not the most, important ways for young people to understand the world. Among those many channels on the Internet, people favor social media due to its high interactivity, brevity, and diverse content. The information disseminated by social media has become one major part people browsing on the Internet.

Short videos are a popular form of video clips or footages on social media platforms, with length ranging from a few seconds or minutes. Due to its versatile, fragmented, and entertaining features, short videos quickly gained its national-wide popularity in China and became the crucial source of information in Chinese people's daily life since the birth of the first batch of short video apps "Miaopai" and "Wei Shi" in 2013. According to a report from the Office of the National Information Commission of China, the number of short video users in China was 873 million as of December 2020, accounting for 88.3% of the total Chinese Internet users.

With the rapid development of short video industry, its content format has also begun to develop from the purely entertaining clips at first to a multifaceted form,

starting to reflect more social values and people's voices. In recent years, mainstream Chinese social media platforms, such as RED, Tiktok, and Bilibili, have actively expanded the market for knowledge transmitting short videos, subsidized education bloggers, and launched a variety of humanity and art projects. Such activities encourage users to connect and communicate with art, setting off an upsurge for people to conceptualize the art through short videos. In this research, the author will use the mainstream social media platform "RED" as a specific example in the following study. Based on Laswell's "5W"[1] communication theory, this study will examine the possibility of art education on Chinese social media from the five dimensions of communication: subject, content, channel, target, and effect, hoping to facilitate the popularization of art education on societal level in China.

2. THE NECESSITY OF ART EDUCATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Art education is an integral part of national holistic education. It plays an indispensable educational role for young people to improve their aesthetic knowledge, cultivate creative thinking, and broaden their horizons. Art education is used to develop students' ability to

conceptualize, appreciate, and eventually create beauty. Not only can art education improve students' personal accomplishment, but it can also promote the improvement of aesthetic insights of the society as a whole. Taking developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States as an example, their art education has shown systematic and public-oriented features. [2] In the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, the discipline of art is of the same important status as the other five basic disciplines, including Language and Culture, Second Language, Individual and Society, Science, and Mathematics. Similarly, in the American Advanced Placement courses, Art Education is regarded as one of the seven foundation courses.

In contrast, China has been constrained by the traditional teaching model solely based on examinations. Even if some newly launched high school curriculum standards have introduced mandatory art courses, they remained less attractive to students and parents since the art category is not a content of the National College Entrance Examination. As a result, the presence of art courses in school is still limited.

In China, where universal art education is relatively scarce, social media has acted as a more suitable carrier for channeling art and public aesthetics. And among social media, short videos have become a powerful booster for the popularization of art education because of their blistering, convenient spreading forms, and miscellaneous content. In terms of communication scale, short videos cover more than 88% of Chinese Internet users and are one of the most powerful means of communication and socialization. In terms of disseminating methods, short videos could easily break through the limitations of time and space of traditional art education. With a portable device like smartphone or tablet, one can share high-quality art resources anytime and anywhere. Last but not least, the content in short videos integrates rich, vivid, and expressive information, such as sound, text, and pictures [3], which can mobilize multiple senses of the audience simultaneously, coinciding with the presentation methods required by various art categories. Since these videos are compact, strong in visual impact, and easily accessible, they can effectively trigger students' interest in independent learning and ultimately achieve high-efficiency learning. Even facing some art expression with high thresholds to appreciate, the new vehicle of art education can subtly transmit the aesthetic teachings through the artistic production and dissemination on this platform. This immersive experience would result in the enrichment and diversification of the public artistic perception.

3. HOW TO ACHIEVE ART EDUCATION THROUGH SHORT VIDEOS, TAKING THE RED PLATFORM AS AN EXAMPLE

RED is one of the mainstream social media platforms

in China. Founded by Mao Wenchao and Qu Fang in Shanghai in 2013, RED takes "Inspiring Lives" as its mission. Users can record life moments in short videos, pictures, and texts, share lifestyles, and make interactions based on interests. The platform has diverse content, covering beauty, life, food, clothing, art, etc. [4]. According to the statistics of Qiangua Data in April 2021[5], RED currently has more than 100 million monthly active users. In 2020, the number of post published is nearly 300 million, and more than 10 billion note exposures are generated every day. Active users tend to be young with 83.31% of them being 18-34, and they mostly pursue high-quality material and spiritual life.

In 2021, RED officially launched the "RED Humanities and Art Season" project to attract users to art-related content, which fueled the artistic passion of platform users and created more than 400 million readings and discussions.

3.1 Opinion leaders in the art field: the main force of communicating art education videos

In RED, the propagation of art education videos is mostly done by opinion leaders in the art field. The concept of opinion leaders originated from the science of communication. In the 1940s, communication scholar Paul Lazarsfeld claimed, "The information of mass communication does not flow directly to the general audience, but first flows to the opinion leader, and then the opinion leader passes it to the general audience, which forms a two-level communication model: from mass communication to opinion leader and finally to general audience." [6]The opinion leaders in the traditional media era are mostly experts or authorities in various industries. In the social media era, however, the opinion leaders are from different social classes. They are particularly active and relatively influential users who often devote themselves to certain topics. These opinion leaders are closer to their audiences with more robust interactions, and share more personal and subjective comments.

On the RED platform, opinion leaders in the art field are mostly experts. Some of them are art students or teachers; others are practitioners in the art industry or enthusiasts in arts. Even private or public art institutions also participate. As the main force of art education videos propagation, these opinion leaders use their strengths to create and share art-related content, allowing audiences to discover art, to understand art, and to form the art ecosystem on RED.

3.2. Content analysis-the content of art education videos

Unlike art education in a traditional classroom setting with curriculum constraints, art education through short video clips shows strong vitality, creativity, and

flexibility. Popular content categories include popularization of art knowledge, displaying art creations, and sharing life aesthetics. This excerpt will analyze the three types of communication content listed above by examining the works of four opinion leaders in the art field.

3.2.1 Popularization of Art Knowledge

“San Kou Cao Mei” is a Master of Art student in a college in Europe. Her videos mainly focus on the popularization of art knowledge, such as explaining artworks, analyzing artists, summarizing art history, etc., and they often last 3-10 minutes. These videos are very thematic because they often combine trending topics on the Internet with art. For example, in her representative video “The Woman Behind the World-Famous Painting! Affectionate VS Playboy Artist,” San Kou Cao Mei starts with Picasso’s love history. Besides introducing Picasso’s love stories, she popularized his life, his painting styles, and representative works at different stages for the audience. Among her videos, San Kou Cao Mei integrates complex art knowledge into humorous language, fast-paced editing style, interesting and playful illustrations and sound effects to teach the audience professional art knowledge in a more attractive way. She stimulates the public and generates interest and thinking.

“An Di De Mei Yuan Ri Chang” is a student from the Central Academy of Fine Arts. His videos mainly explain artworks and introduce art exhibitions, usually around a minute. An Di’s videos are usually the first-person narrative about students’ artworks and school exhibitions at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in plain language. An Di’s videos make fine art and audiences closer, let the audiences become immersive, and showcase the creative ideas and meaning of artworks.

3.2.2 Display of Art creation

“Zhao Xiao li” is an art creator. Her videos focus on her work to show the audience the process of artistic creation from concepts to the final product. In her video, the whole drawing process is shortened to about one minute. The drawing steps, such as drafting, sketching, and coloring, are all spliced together at a fast pace. Combined with her unique painting style, her video creates a strong visual impact. This kind of display video can give the audience a rough understanding of art creation in a short time and arouse their interest in imitating creation and producing more space and vitality for art dissemination.

3.2.3 Sharing of Life Aesthetics

“Wan Wan” is an art museum director. She became popular on the “Douban” platform in the early years. Due

to her tonal aesthetic and influence on social media, RED invited her to become the platform’s lifestyle Spokesperson. After the opening of the Mumu Art Museum, Wanwan’s posts primarily focus on her artworks. Unlike the popularization of art knowledge, Wan Wan emphasized on integrating artistic aesthetics into daily life, which means artistic elements are everywhere in her videos. When sharing her favorite lifestyle accessories with the audience, she sits in front of a white wall with a piece of artwork. The sofa, pillows, and clothes she wears show her aesthetic standards. She introduces the painters Lucas Cranbach and John Currin, who generated inspiration for her makeup, to the audience when she introduces her makeup. Among her videos, Morandi’s color is an important artistic element that connects everything she shares. Her video tones, clothing colors, and video background colors all match the logo color of the famous painter Morandi’s paintings. Led by Wan Wan and other RED bloggers sharing clothing in Morandi colors, professional aesthetic terms such as “Morandi” and “Morandi color matching” formally entered the public’s vocabulary. RED sparked a heated discussion and set the low-saturation color as the aesthetic indicator of high-level beauty. In Wan Wan’s videos, the threshold of art is invisibly lowered. Art is no longer created for the walls of great halls like Van Dyck but everything in our life. Because of the diversified content, users with various interests can connect with each other and learn more about art through Wan Wan’s videos and be influenced by pleasing aesthetics. This leads to the integration of art education in life.

3.3 Platform Interpretation-Communication Channels of Art Education Videos

RED is a User Generated Content platform. According to its official website, more than 95% of the content is created by users spontaneously. In RED, the relationship between creators and viewers is fluid. Every user is not only a viewer of the community but also a creator of community content [4].

On the main page of RED, there are three main sections: “Follow,” “Discover,” and “Same City.” The “Follow” section promotes good interactive communication between opinion leaders and fans. Users can only receive their updates after following the bloggers. While watching videos, users can continue to follow their favorite art education bloggers to make this education more consistent and express their views on the video through interactive features, such as likes and comments. They can also question and communicate with the blogger after replying.

The “Discovery” section is the public domain traffic belonging to the RED platform, in which users will receive the content pushed by the platform after refreshing. Most of these pushed contents are related to the user’s past interests and preferences, such as searched

keywords, videos watched for a long time, frequently watched video type, etc. When users are followers in the art field, they will receive more art-related content. Another part is related to trending topics on the platform, such as the “RED Humanities and Art Season” project launched in 2021. In order to build a good art environment on the platform, RED attracts more artists and art fans to actively create short art videos on the platform. Furthermore, they give public domain traffic rewards to blog posts under topics and push high-quality art content to the homepages of more users who have not paid attention to the field so that more people can understand art. To encourage creators, RED has also established an incentive policy of the 500,000 directional traffic pool. Incentivized by these mechanisms, the affiliated tags of the project “All Things Can Be Art” and “I Am a Humanity and Art Master” aroused users’ artistic enthusiasm and caused more than 400 million readings and discussions.

3.4 Communication object

As of 2020, the monthly active users on RED exceeded 100 million, accounting for a significant proportion of the total number of Internet users in China. Over 80% of RED users are between 18-34 years old, showing a trend of platform users becoming younger [5]. According to Qiangua Data’s user portraits, these users generally pursue high-quality life and a spiritual world. On the RED platform, audiences of art education videos are mainly divided into two categories. One type of user is a general audience. Although these users are mainly concerned with beauty, skincare, and food, they are also keen to pursue aesthetic experience in lifestyle content. According to the portraits of active users interested in lifestyle on Qiangua data, this type of users usually has a high taste and pursues details of life. Their requirements for products are not only at the user level, but they also hope to express their aesthetics, personality, and ideals through the decoration. Such users can get good aesthetic

education in lifestyle aesthetics videos. They can learn about art through different fields such as beauty and home furnishing and receive aesthetic influence. However, the other part of the audience is art lovers or related practitioners. They can learn more about art through art videos such as art knowledge popularization and art creation display.

3.5 Communication effect

In order to explore the effect of art education videos on social media, the author designed a questionnaire covering the following four dimensions:

- Are they attracted by art education videos?
- Are they willing to learn from the videos?
- Can they use the acquired knowledge?
- Are they willing to spread this art knowledge?

In this survey, 106 users were selected from the audiences of art education videos on the platform. The questionnaire uses the Wenjuanxing, an online survey platform, and the subject adopts the Likert scale 5-level measurement method, requiring the respondents to choose from ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neutral’, and ‘disagree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. The corresponding measurement questions are divided into five levels, giving scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

The author explore the four aspects of the 106 users, including age, gender, education level, and time spent on mobile phones. Among the survey participants, 88.68% of the users are between 18-24 years old, 99.06% are women, 88.68% have a Bachelor’s degree, and 44.34% use mobile phones for 6-9 hours a day. According to the statistics of Qiangua Data in April 2021, 83.31% of the RED users is within 18-34 years old; 90.41% are female users, and 9.59% are men. It can be seen that art education videos have achieved targeted push to young people.

Table 1: Users will be attracted to art education videos

| Compared with the ordinary videos on RED, I would like to pay more attention to video content with good aesthetics and artistic sense. | Subtotal (Number of Users) | Proportion |
|--|----------------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.89% |
| Disagree | 2 | 1.89% |
| Neutral | 5 | 4.72% |
| Agree | 26 | 24.53% |
| Strongly Agree | 71 | 66.98% |
| Number of valid entries for this question | 106 | |

The author surveyed whether users will be attracted to art education videos. 66.98% of users said they are very willing to pay more attention to video content with

good aesthetics and artistic sense. Only 1.89% of users said they did not at all. The study will use this as a measurement standard. When it comes to whether they

are willing to actively search for art-related content on the platform, such as artistic restaurants and artistic expertise, 39.62% of users agree, and only 2.83% say they are not. It can be seen that under the pleasing art

environment created by RED, users have also received a subtle influence in watching videos every day and have become interested in things with a sense of art.

Table 2: Users will learn knowledge in art education videos

| When I see the artistic and aesthetic clothing matching and home display in the video, I will be willing to follow the blogger to learn from her good taste. | Subtotal (Number of Users) | Proportion |
|--|----------------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Neutral | 11 | 10.38% |
| Agree | 33 | 31.13% |
| Strongly Agree | 62 | 58.49% |
| Number of valid entries in this question | 106 | |

The author further investigated whether users are willing to learn from art education videos. 58.49% of users said that they would be willing to learn from bloggers when they see artistic and aesthetic clothing matching and home display in the video. No users expressed their unwillingness to learn. For more professional videos such as art exhibition, explanations,

and knowledge popularization, 47.17% of users expressed their willingness to follow the videos to learn knowledge points, only 0.94% strongly disagreed. Art education videos attract the interest of users. In addition, it makes users willing to watch passively and actively search and follow the video to learn, which provides the possibility to achieve art education by video clips.

Table 3: Users will use the learned content

| When going out to play, I will be more inclined to choose artistic space scenes, such as restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, or scenic spots with an artistic atmosphere. | Subtotal (Number of Users) | Proportion |
|--|----------------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.94% |
| Disagree | 1 | 0.94% |
| Neutral | 11 | 10.38% |
| Agree | 29 | 27.36% |
| Strongly Agree | 64 | 60.38% |
| Number of valid entries in this question | 106 | |

In terms of application, after watching and learning, 60.38% of users said that they are willing to apply the aesthetic tastes learned from life aesthetics bloggers' videos to their daily life, such as buying products, matching clothes, etc. Only 0.94% of users indicated that they strongly disagree. Similarly, 60.38% of users indicated that they strongly agreed with this as a criterion and preferred to choose artistically-oriented spatial

scenes such as restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, scenic spots with artistic atmosphere, etc. With a good aesthetic tone, only 0.94% of users expressed disagreement. After users were nurtured by the good aesthetics in art education videos, more than half of them flexibly applied this aesthetic orientation to their life to raise their daily aesthetic tone.

Table 4: Users will spread the acquired artistic knowledge to others

| I would like to share the art knowledge and art creation skills I have learned from the art knowledge science videos with my friends | Subtotal (Number of Users) | Proportion |
|--|----------------------------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.94% |
| Disagree | 3 | 2.83% |

| | | |
|--|-----|--------|
| Neutral | 19 | 17.92% |
| Agree | 32 | 30.19% |
| Strongly Agree | 51 | 48.11% |
| Number of valid entries in this question | 106 | |

Finally, when discussing whether they are willing to spread the content they have learned, more than 50% of users expressed their willingness to share artistic life aesthetics videos with friends and convey this elegant aesthetic taste and visual pleasure. Simultaneously, 48.11% Of users said that they are willing to share the professional art knowledge and artistic creation skills learned in the video with people around them.

4. CONCLUSION

This article takes China's well-known short video platform "RED" as an example to study the dissemination methods and effects of art education video clips on this platform using literature research, case analysis, content analysis, and questionnaire surveys. Based on Laswell's "5W" communication theory, comprehensive research of the communication strategies of art videos from the four perspectives, communication subject, communication content, communication target, and communication channel has been conducted, and the creator characteristics of the RED platform, content types, user characteristics, and platform characteristics have been closely analyzed and studied. With regard to the level of communication effects, this article uses a questionnaire survey method to evaluate the target audience's recognition of the four dimensions (from attraction to communication) of art education videos. Through the above research, the author found that art education on social media via short videos not only allows the audience to learn more about art at the cognitive level but also teaches them proactively to apply this aesthetic sentiment to daily life. It has truly created a pleasant atmosphere on the Internet for national aesthetic education, which will help promote the development of Chinese youth art education. However, art education through short videos still has certain limitations. The entertaining and fragmented forms of short videos can quickly attract users, but this "fast food" version of art also leads to certain shortcomings in the education model, such as short-term learning. Furthermore, video teaching is difficult to explain a point of knowledge in depth. Different art education videos lack the continuity of knowledge, and users may only have superficial knowledge. Designing and optimizing the video's structure and content to make the art education content on social media more in-depth and consistent will become the focus of the author's future research.

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