

The “Speed and Passion” of the Short Video Era: A Qualitative Study Based on Time Anxiety of Contemporary Youth

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ABSTRACT

The further development of new media has become the era of short videos. Short videos are characterized by their short duration and a large amount of information. The time spent on short videos is as fast as the racing experience, just like the speed experience in *The Fast and Furious*. In using short videos, young people have more or less anxiety due to the “speed and passion” experience. This study classifies this anxiety as time anxiety based on the social time theory perspective. Based on in-depth interviews with ten young people, it found that the time anxiety of young people is mainly reflected in three aspects: time acceleration anxiety, time impatience anxiety, and time loss anxiety. In the unstoppable short video era, to ensure the reasonable use of this new media, the ways that alleviate youth groups' time anxiety should be based on their current situation.

Keywords: *Short video era, Sociology of Time, Sense of time anxiety, Qualitative Research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the accelerated development of global mobile Internet, short video has become an important way for users to obtain information. According to *The 48th Statistical Reports on Internet Development in China* by CNNIC, the survey results show that in 2021, among many new media, the scale of users who used short videos reached 888 million, an increase of 14.4 million from December 2020, accounting for 87.8% of Internet users as a whole. Undoubtedly, we have entered the short video era in the development of new media.

Since ancient times, people have never stopped thinking about time, and research has been focused on astronomy, physics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and other fields. No matter how we discuss the development of time, it is always inseparable from human beings [2]. As Martin Heidegger said, “there is no time without people” [3]. Time is combined with people's social life to reveal its real meaning and thus has social properties. In modern society, where the pace of life is accelerating, time is becoming a scarce resource. People live in social time, and this sense of time scarcity can lead to time pressure and anxiety, which is called the “sense of time running out” by psychologists. The stronger the sense of time running out, the greater the time anxiety.

As a more particular group in society, the youth group

has a dual nature. In the division of lifetime, the youth group is in the immature adult stage and belongs to the backbone of the society. In the social attributes, they are faced with the problems of education and employment and the social interactions of various relationships. It shows that the youth group is more pressed for time. Many studies unfold the psychological mechanism of staying up late for youth, showing that staying up late exists in youth groups due to time anxiety, and there is even the phenomenon of retaliatory staying up late for mobile entertainment activities [4]. In the short video era, it has become common for youth to stay up late to play short video apps like TikTok.

Therefore, this research explores the phenomenon of time anxiety among young people in the era of short videos from time sociology and tries to analyze its temporal factors. Based on this analysis, it aims to clarify the temporal structure of time anxiety and the sense of time passing in the face of “short and fast” characteristics of short videos. Time anxiety is related to many new youth phenomena. It is a specific product of the current era of rapid development of the Internet, which is also a particular life situation of contemporary youth.

2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In discussing the temporal threshold, philosophers have broadly divided it into three views of time, namely,

natural time, lifetime, and social time. Classical sociology extended the study of practice from nature time to social time and proposed a pluralistic theory of time. Emile Durkheim first introduced the concept of social time in his *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* and regarded time as a collective product [2]. Georges Gurvitch pointed out that widespread social phenomena both produce and are products of social time [5]. Pitirim Sorokin and Robert Merton, in their methodological and functional analysis of social time, emphasize the need to distinguish social time from other times [6]. Hartmut Rosa's *The Critical Theory of Social Acceleration* provides a comprehensive analysis of modern social life with its ever-accelerating fast pace and proposes a triple orientation of social acceleration [7]. However, it only regards time as a universal social phenomenon. Following theoretical and empirical research by subsequent scholars, Lewis and Weigert's typology of social time proposes an "embedded-stratified-synchronous" theoretical framework for the analysis of time, which remedies the shortcomings of the Critical Theory of Social Acceleration [8]. It provides a complete theoretical framework for understanding the temporal syndromes of contemporary youth.

2.1. Time acceleration anxiety: life time is getting faster

The Critical Theory of Social Acceleration has a threefold orientation: the acceleration of technological progress, social change, the pace of life. There is a cyclical relationship between these three elements. When people's pace of life accelerates, they can only rely on accelerating technology to help deal with various things in life, thus further promoting the acceleration of social change. In turn, the acceleration of social change leads to the acceleration of the pace of human life [7]. This theory is a good explanation of the time experience of contemporary youth. The complexity of time is expressed in its fragmentation and irregularity.

2.2. Time floating anxiety: time being floated

Type A behaviour is a behavioral trait characterized by a strong sense of time urgency. In the research on time anxiety, Jenkins Activity Survey Manual only treats Type A behaviour as a purely psychological research category, without considering social factors [9]. Later, Price made the first attempt to explain Type A behaviour and time anxiety from a sociological perspective, arguing that people gradually form specific core beliefs through sociocultural values and cognitive factors transmitted by media [10]. It is these beliefs that make people feel anxious and even fearful [10]. Restegary and Landy's study showed that the time pressure and anxiety people feel is due to high expectations about the utilization of limited time.[11]. Also, on people's relative expectation of higher value per unit of time.

2.3. Time Loss Anxiety: Paradoxical Time Management

Some studies show that time anxiety is most substantial among youth [12]. Minghao Huang studied the relationship between time anxiety and self-media use among Chinese college students [13]. He pointed out that college students' procrastination anxiety is closely related to time management. Since many of their studies or work need to be done online nowadays, it is easy to click into self-media networks. Nowadays, short videos are a popular communication medium in new media, and the time for browsing short videos is highly flexible. The psychological pressure of young people when browsing is generally small. In addition, short videos contain a large amount of information in a short period and the high concentration of attention when browsing, making it an irrational and out-of-control behavior in the state of time anxiety, so we should be paid more attention to the time management of youth.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study interviewed ten youths with time anxiety through a semi-structured in-depth interview method, supplemented by participant observation. The basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1. The respondents were anonymous, and their data and related information were coded and analyzed using rooting theory. Each interviewee was interviewed mainly by WeChat or voice chat. The interview content included six questions, including "time and frequency of using short video app" and "please describe your feelings and examples related to time in using short video app". The interviewees' answers were used to ask follow-up questions or add or subtract relevant questions.

Table 1. Background information of the interviewees

Number	Gender	Education	Occupation
S1	Female	Master	Student
S2	Female	Bachelor	Self-Media
S3	Female	Master	Self-Media
S4	Female	Doctor	Student
S5	Male	Bachelor	Civil Servant
S6	Female	Master	Teacher
S7	Male	Bachelor	Student
S8	Male	Doctor	Teacher
S9	Male	Bachelor	Bank staff
S10	Female	Bachelor	Teacher

A total of 10 interviews were obtained for this study, and the interview time ranged from 20-58 minutes, with an average interview time of 37.4 minutes. After the interviews, the recordings were coded and transcribed in three stages of coding according to Lichtman's method

[14], and the coding consistency coefficient was 0.76, which met the statistical requirements.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Time acceleration anxiety: fragmentation of time being cut

The youth groups with time anxiety in the interview of this study invariably revealed that the original intention of short videos was to make people's lives easier and faster. Still, the actual situation is not as good as it seems. Traditional books and movies restrict the mobility of the audience, and moving during the reading and watching process means pausing. When the body is relatively still and the mind is concentrated, that is the time for reading and watching movies.. But in the short video era, the cell phone becomes an extension of the body. Short video with its short time contains a large amount of information, almost everyone is thinking of a short video just a few minutes, using their commute and a short break to brush short video, but their time cut into pieces.

"With the constant stimulation of short videos, it is difficult for people to concentrate for a long time". (S6)

"I am a practitioner in the short video industry. The original intention of the short video was good, to make use of users' fragmented time, but it has developed to fragment users' time instead". (S2)

4.2. Time float anxiety: the ever-increasing time float

The fast-food nature of short videos can help people reach both emotional and psychological satisfaction in a limited time. In media science, the act of watching short videos can be interpreted as the audience gaining maximum freedom in the decoding process. Such convenient and effective decoding allows the audience to no longer be limited to a specific time, breaking through the traditional regulated view of time. In Price's explanation, he points out this kind of time anxiety that audience members feel after receiving the core idea that they can read a certain book or watch a certain movie in a few minutes from the communicator and then return to reality to find out that this is not the case [10].

"Time passed quickly as I swiped through the videos, and it seemed like I spent more time than I usually would reading and watching movies, but I got nothing out of it." (S10)

"After an individual accepts and recognizes the idea that something can be done in a few minutes, he will raise his or her time expectations and desperately wants to improve the utilization of his or her time. These expectations are more or less unrealistic, and after feeling the gap between the ideal and the reality, they fall into a

bad cycle of time anxiety.

I was always using so-called reading techniques to increase my reading speed. But it didn't work, and I continued to use short video decoding over and over again to save time." (S5)

4.3. Time loss anxiety: the ambivalence of ups and downs

The analytical framework of Lewis and Weigert's typology of social time suggests that time has different roles when embedded into varying levels of individuals, groups, and societies [8] wherein under the short video era, individual time is embedded into the more macroscope levels to different degrees. Even under the short video era, both users who upload videos and view videos have their time embedded in various degrees with diversity and complexity. The process of time management is also the process of time de-embedding.

"The truth is that I always have many excuses for executing my plan. I still ended up wasting all the timepieces." (S5)

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the information obtained from in-depth interviews, this paper analyzes youth's time anxiety in three dimensions: time acceleration anxiety, time restlessness anxiety, and time loss anxiety. As a framework for analysis, the socio-temporal perspective only serves as a guide to youth time anxiety and the current situation of youth use of short videos in the era of short video boom. This study draws three main conclusions based on the above analysis.

First of all, the time acceleration anxiety comes from being characterized by the short duration of short videos and the large amount of information they contain, which attracts users to use them, but fragments their time to a certain extent. The original intention of short videos is to hope that users will use their fragmented time, but in reality, it is not. Secondly, time floating anxiety involves two influencing factors in this study. First, short videos convey their speediness and are accepted by users and no longer identify with the time spent before. Second, after receiving the speediness of short videos, they raise their time expectations. Although these expectations are unrealistic, achieving them generates time anxiety. Finally, time loss anxiety is elaborated in contrast to time management. Youth have complex and contradictory psychology in losing control of time management. One type of time management that puts hope in tomorrow is another type of time loss anxiety that arises from the tension that time waits for no one and that they will be left behind if they do not catch up.

However, there are also some shortcomings in this study. As an exploratory study, this paper only

interviewed 10 youth groups from the Internet and failed to focus on more types of youth groups. It was also impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews, but only online social networking software for text and voice chat, which may not be comprehensive enough to understand the situation. Moreover, this paper only presents the current situation and factors influencing time anxiety among youth groups. How to further alleviate the time anxiety caused by short videos among youth groups is to be explored in more detail by future scholars.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Xiaotong Tan.

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