



Research on the Relationship Between Short Videos and Food Consumption

Beichen Liu(✉)

Basis International School Shenzhen, Shenzhen, China
Beichen.liu11493@basisinternational-sz.com

Abstract. With the development of Internet economy and the progress of new media technology, we media represented by short videos has greatly affected all aspects of people's lives. Among them, the most important food culture in people's life has changed the most obviously. As more and more people begin to share food and cooking skills on the Internet, food has become a product and landscape, and a unique cultural phenomenon. This paper mainly studies through a combination of questionnaire and interview. Through the questionnaire, it can be found that most people have the habit of watching short food videos in their daily life, which reflects the impact of new media on food culture. At the same time, the interview samples also reflect the differences in people's views and comments on food short videos. This paper further demonstrates the relationship between food short videos and consumer culture. It can be clearly found that the spread of food short videos on new media has greatly affected people's consumption demand for food culture. In this paper, the research samples are not sufficient, and the theoretical analysis needs to be improved, but this paper will still be beneficial to provide some data and cases for the study of food culture from the perspective of new media.

Keywords: Short videos · New media · Food consumption

1 Introduction

With the development of new media technology, especially the popularization and promotion of social media based on short videos, food and cooking have become very popular, and even become an important consumer culture. People can watch documentaries of various delicacies through new media and feel the lifestyle and special delicacies of people in different places. Through new media consumption channels such as live broadcast and goods delivery, people can also buy special delicacies and products from different places. New media have a great impact on the spread of food, which will also affect people's lives. In recent years, the phenomenon of short video culture similar to the phenomenon of Li Ziqi has helped different countries and regions share different food cultures in a short time. New media short videos are bound to drive the cross-cultural communication and consumption of food. At the same time, people will also promote the emergence of new cultural phenomena through Internet consumption.

Food in China is not simply for someone to make themselves full, but a form of unique, meaningful culture to each individual or group, which leads to food videos

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J. Sun et al. (Eds.): SSESD 2022, ASSEHR 684, pp. 459–465, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-13-8_55

being popular on the Chinese TikTok platform. “Sichuan, Guizhou and Hunan are three provinces in china that are close to each other. People from Sichuan have no fear for peppery food. People from Guizhou never find any peppery food to be fearsome. People from Hunan is afraid of the food to be not peppery enough” [1]. The quote reflects how the three provinces’ food culture are fans to peppery, spicy stuff. It is normal to have similar food culture when the provinces are located next to each other. However, Guangdong and Fujian are two provinces in the Southern part of China that are also closely located with each other. However, the food culture in these provinces is so different that a person living in Guangdong would throw up when eating Fujian food. Guangdong’s food almost never contains spicy flavor, while Fujian is full of spicy dishes. This reflects the diversity of Chinese food, which is why Chinese people are so interested in food videos and so attractive. As food and cooking videos become more popular, especially with the how-tos, people are getting to be taught on how to make food on their own, largely helping to avoid “conventional” food with chemicals and unhealthy elements [2].

TikTok is a video based social network owned by ByteDance Ltd of Shanghai china, starting in September 2016. This app has gained over 8 hundred million users in merely six years, showing how fast developing and popular this app has been. According to Chinese TikTok official website, 15% of all videos on TikTok is related to food and cooking. This number is quite scary considering an average fifteen million increase in number of videos each day. With the outburst of covid, people had to stay home, restaurants struggled a lot, and many are locked. Due to this reason, people’s need of cooking at home increases tremendously, leading to a further increase in the production of food videos on TikTok. This paper will focus and investigate into how food and cooking videos on TikTok is influencing consumer culture in China.

2 Literature Review

Some scholar discusses the connections between digital and real-life food consumption, explaining how some “big food players” manipulates social media to cause an impact on “food citizens”, in other words, consumers. It also calls for action of “food citizens” to raise awareness towards digital food influences. It offered new perspectives into critically analyzing digital food and its effect on consumer culture, reminding us to consider the ups and downs of the developing digital food industry [3]. Food porn is a phrase more and more used nowadays. It refers to the action of filming or recording food on a device and sent on internet for display. Someone discusses the future of “food porn” and how it is developing in a tremendous speed. With food porn developing so fast, it is causing a huge impact on society. “Food as a vital part of culture, identity, belonging, and meaning making celebrates both the everyday and the invitation to renew connections through food as a universal subject of appeal. Food images symbolize connection at a distance through everyday material culture and practices.” This quote accurately describes the important role food porn is playing in current society. It is not merely just a form of entertainment, but a cultural connection that brings creations, impacting the whole society in countless ways, including consumer culture [4].

In recent years, scholars have also studied food communication from the perspective of cultural communication. Some scholars took Hakka food culture as an example to

discuss the importance and economic value of its inheritance and promotion. Their research analyzed the problems of information asymmetry and lack of clear development ideas in the dissemination of Hakka food culture. Taking advantage of the advantages of new media to disseminate Hakka food, they proposed to create wechat official account, website, online food map and documentary film to inherit and promote Hakka food culture. To a certain extent, this will help to publicize the Hakka food culture to the outside world, thus playing a positive role in promoting economic development [5].

Some scholars investigated the practice of urban food communication under new media technology, especially mobile media. They found that the new media communication of food has four characteristics, including the media of food communication, the flow and positioning of food space, utilitarian and strategic network communication, visual expression and collusive performance. At the same time, they also analyzed that behind the new media diet communication, urban people face multiple emotional crises, such as numbness and unilateralism of perception from body to mind, distance anxiety and insecurity, indifference to intimacy, and fear of being alone. Finally, they tried to explore the changes of public and private space in urban daily life in the mobile media era [6].

There are also scholars concerned about the development of food network anchors. They believe that with the rapid development of network technology and the popularity of smart phones, people's pursuit of entertainment is also gradually increasing, and the new career of network anchor came into being. With the continuous development of new media, webcast has become a fashion, including webcasters with food as the main live content. In the era of new media, it is necessary to conduct a special analysis on the dissemination of online food anchors to show the current situation of the anchor industry and point out the existing problems, so as to provide reference for practitioners in relevant industries [7].

In addition to the research on network anchors, some scholars also pay attention to product design. At present, in the era of new media, the Internet platform of food theme has developed from PC end to mobile application end and even all media, and its visual design has also changed, which has ushered in a new development opportunity for food design and given a unique visual experience to food culture. In terms of research methods, they mainly used eye tracker to test the selected 16 users, and combined with user interviews, conducted experimental testing and Design Analysis on the current popular food mobile application app, mining the visual characteristics of the food image content on the mobile terminal. By summarizing that food design is affected by scene, color, synaesthesia and other factors, they believe that improving relevant influencing factors will help improve the visual experience of food design in new media [8].

Of course, in the context of the development of new media, scholars also pay attention to the traditional way of food communication and the dissemination of characteristic culture [9–12]. Mao mengcan, a young scholar, takes the classic Food Program “Eating eight directions” as a case study, and believes that the motivation for the new media reform of the TV food program mainly includes subjective and objective aspects, namely, the orientation of academic trends and the change of new media technical conditions, and then discusses the new opportunities and challenges faced by regional food experience programs in the new media era [13].

3 Methods

The research methods of this paper include questionnaire and interview. In order to understand how food videos affect and reflect Chinese consumer culture, it is best to interview tiktok users' feelings about cooking or food videos to see how much they are affected in their daily consumption. Through the interview, the author can easily understand in detail how people are affected by the Internet and new media, how their diet changes, and how much people change their diet due to the videos on tiktok. The interview method does help to obtain a lot of detailed information, but for the actual number and percentage, in order to obtain accurate results, it also needs to use the survey method. This article mainly conducts a survey by issuing an online questionnaire to understand the impact of tiktok food videos on people. This survey mainly focuses on two issues: the time spent watching food videos every day, and the respondents' subjective evaluation of the impact of short food videos.

4 Results

The first question of this survey is, "how long do you watch food videos every day?" Among the 103 tiktok users randomly selected, most of them often watch food videos, which is a high proportion. Among them, 14.6% of the respondents watch short videos for an average of more than 2 h a day, 36.9% watch short videos for an average of more than 1 h to less than 2 h a day, 21.4% watch short videos for less than 1 h a day, and 27.2% watch short videos for less than half an hour. These data fully show that the vast majority of the people surveyed have the experience of watching food videos, which also proves the universality of this cultural phenomenon (Fig. 1).

The second question is, "how much does the food and cooking videos on tiktok affect your diet?" Among the 103 random investigators, a shocking 71.8% were affected to some extent, and another 16.5% had completely changed their diet. Overall, 88.3% of people have changed their food consumption due to the impact of new media short videos. This reflects the important role of food videos on tiktok in consumers. However, in order to understand in detail how they were affected, we conducted further follow-up interviews after the questionnaire survey (Fig. 2).

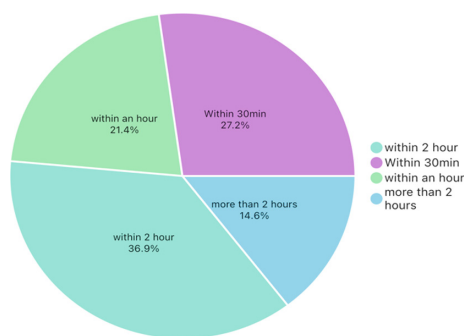


Fig. 1. Statistics of viewing duration of short food videos

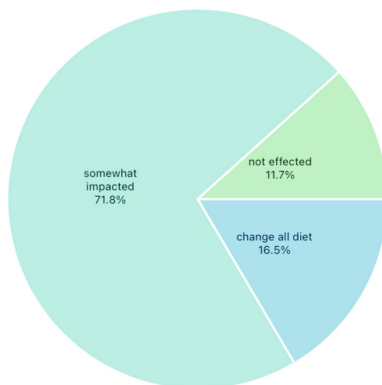


Fig. 2. Statistics of viewing duration of short food videos

Three interviews were done with three survey takers. One of the surveys is taken by my friend, Richard Wang. He is a veteran TikTok user and had regularly watched food videos over 2 h. His answer for the previous question was somewhat impacted. “After having watched lots of vlog takers telling us how to eat healthily, what to buy that allows you to avoid conventional food and keep your body fat at a healthy level, I started to take in some of the advice. I tried to replace my daily diet of pork to meat that are said to be healthier, like beef or chicken. But that is all, I cannot change my whole diet up because that sometimes makes me starve and it is not convenient to follow the plans of some food videos.” According to his statement, with the impact of the videos of food on TikTok, he tried to make his diet healthier, but wasn’t considering changing all of his diet due to inconvenience.

Another interview was done with someone that chose the same answer. “I was definitely impacted by food videos on TikTok. Whenever it is late at night and I see the gorgeous food displayed on TikTok, I just couldn’t help to stop my starvation. I would uncontrollably order something or bake something that are not usually healthy. They could be fried chicken or fries, just something that would stop me from the hunger after watching food videos.” According to this statement, food videos on TikTok did somewhat alter his diet, but negatively in which he gets starving at night when food videos are displayed.

Last interview was done to someone that said their diet was completely changed. “I used to be really fat and I had tried to lose weight. There was a time when I was doing sports everyday like crazy, but it helps really little. Until there was one time when a food video taker said that in order to control weight, controlling diet is the first step. Then I started to watch how healthy people ate on TikTok, and I started to strictly follow their plan. Turns out, diet control did help me lose weight and it made me trust the vlog takers even more. I would follow their video update everyday and try to learn their diets. For now, all of my previously unhealthy diet is changed and replaced with plans provided by TikTok video takers.” He is excited when telling his story. Obviously, TikTok platform had become one of his life changers, and the food videos had helped him to become thinner, healthier. He trusts the videos and changes his diet completely.

A collected data from Tik Tok website, ranking the top 10 amount of likes of food videos on Tik Tok, teaching and offering healthy diet plans have the highest likes. Among them, unsurprisingly, we can see that losing weight diet videos are the most popular. This is due to the high standard and accessing of appearance and body by nowadays people. Having a good body shape, becoming good looking is always a first-to-be considered thing for lots of people. And videos of losing weight diet usually impacts consumer culture. These videos typically tell audience what to eat, creating diet plans for consumers and most importantly, they try to collaborate with companies to sell those products of healthy food to consumers. Despite the good intentions to spread “green food” replacing conventional food ideals, all in all, video takers are trying to make profit. Therefore, audience of these videos are always persuaded or lured to consume food that is being advertised on videos.

5 Conclusion

Throughout the data of the survey and interview, strong impact of food videos on consumer culture is reflected. As food porn is growing and becoming more and more popular, its role that is played in our society is undeniable. With this, consumer culture is tremendously changed. Some percentages of people are having diet that are healthier, better for their body after taking in suggestions from video takers. Some percentages of people were affected negatively, in which they eat more of the “unhealthy food” that contains maybe high sugar value, high level of salt or elements that are not necessarily good for their body. But all in all, a major percentage of people are changing their consumption of food. Chinese consumer culture is undeniably being affected by food and cooking videos on TikTok. As mentioned previously, with such a popularity of food and cooking videos, drafts and research on the topic is exceptionally small in amount. As the impact of food videos grow, the topic is worth to explore and emphasize, and hopefully future food videos can help develop better good for everyone through publishing quality content, improving diets and impacting consumer culture positively.

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