



The Influence of Background Music on the Communication Effect of Mainstream Media's Short Videos on Douyin

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Abstract. Nowadays, news-based short videos have become an important method of news communication, which contain background music as the main part to enhance communication effectiveness. In order to figure out whether background music has an influence on news-based short videos' communication effectiveness, this study takes the short videos of *People's Daily* on Douyin as the research subject. The background music in a certain period is collected and its characteristics is summed up. Moreover, based on these characteristics, a questionnaire survey is conducted from the audiences' perspective to investigate the influence of the styles, genres, and emotional expression effects of background music on communication effectiveness. The study finds that the background music of the videos posted by *People's Daily* on Douyin has a strong emotional impact and can facilitate audiences' understanding of content, and the type of background music affects audiences' interest in watching short videos. These findings may make a reference for the development of other mainstream news media.

Keywords: Background music, People's Daily, Short news videos, Communication effectiveness.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

On September 8, 2018, the *People's Daily's* Douyin account was officially opened and certified, and as of June 14, 2022, a total of 4,087 short videos were released, with the number of fans exceeding 160 million.

The two core elements of short news videos are visual and auditory. In previous studies, researchers have mostly focused on analysing the effect of visual factors on the communication of news-based short videos and ignored the importance of auditory factors.

This paper takes the short videos of *People's Daily* on Douyin as the objects of study and wants to find out the characteristics of their background music and the impact of these characteristics on the effectiveness of news communication.

1.2 Literature Review

With the booming development of news-based short videos, many studies have been conducted to review the development status of news-based short videos. Relying on the short videos, news has strong advantages in terms of timeliness as well as brevity and has stronger communication power compared with traditional news reporting [1]. Besides, news-based short videos' communication characteristics mainly focus on meeting audiences' needs, including their preference for diversified experiences, visual content, and emotional resonance [2].

Many scholars have studied the production of short videos' content. News-based short videos focus on diversity in the selection of material, covering a wide range of fields such as daily life, politics, and international news. In the aspect of the processing of images, some scholars point out that different scenes should be used to present the main and secondary relationships of things [2]. Meanwhile, subtitles should be used to explain the content of the images and for the sound processing of short news videos, background music should be added to increase the emotional resonance for the purpose of enhancing the communication effect [3,4].

At present, in the field of journalism and communication, relevant studies about background music mainly focus on short video platforms such as Douyin. Researchers seldom consider the musical characteristics of short videos' background music from the creators' perspective but from the listeners' perspective. For example, they generally describe audiences' feelings about music and summarize the communication patterns of music with the help of theoretical knowledge of journalism and communication to refine the innovative points about background music [5,6].

Background music is a major feature of short videos. Technology has promoted the combination of music and video and enabled the visualization of music, which in turn has facilitated changes in audiences' habits of watching short video [7,8].

The emergence of Douyin short videos has led to the symbiotic development of video and music, which have mutually enhanced each other's communication effects. From the perspective of music communication, in short videos on platforms such as Douyin, music can be in the spotlight, but from the perspective of short videos' content communication, the music itself can undoubtedly become a booster of content communication. When it comes to news-based short videos, the strong rhythm of background music promotes the spread of news programs [9,10]. In addition, background music can promote traditional culture and also facilitate communication among network users.

1.3 Research Method

In this study, firstly, a total of 150 samples of short videos of *People's Daily* from 13 May 2022 to 21 June 2022 are classified according to their music styles, music genres,

and the strength of emotions, and a total of 147 valid videos are chosen. The content of the news-based short videos is also sorted out according to the themes

Based on the statistical results, a questionnaire is set up to analyse the reception of these short videos, namely, the influence of background music on the communication effect of news videos. The questionnaire used in this study is divided into four parts. The first part collects the basic information of the respondents, including age, gender, etc. The second part asks respondents how they feel about the emotional expression of the short videos. The third part mainly asks respondents how they feel about the background music styles of the short videos. The fourth part deals with their feeling about the music genres. The questionnaire is distributed on the online platform Questionnaire Star. A total of 388 questionnaires are collected in this study, 234 of which are valid.

1.4 Central Thesis

This paper finds that the background music of the short videos of *People's Daily* on Douyin has the following characteristics. First, the music styles are various and can promote audiences to understand the content of the short videos. Second, the music which strongly stimulates the audiences' moods accounts for about 90%. Third, popular music accounts for about 91%. The influence of the background music on the *People's Daily's* communication effectiveness can be summed up in three points. First, the background music of *People's Daily's* short videos on Douyin can effectively promote the emotional expression of the content and further has a strong emotional influence on audiences when they watch them. Second, with the help of background music, the videos of *People's Daily* form a certain news framework, which makes it easy for audiences to accept the information transmitted by the short videos. Third, the music genre is mainly pop music, but audiences generally have a stereotype of the *People's Daily's* Douyin account, which reduces the effectiveness of the content communication to a certain extent.

2 Characteristics of Background Music and Their Influence on Communication Effectiveness

2.1 Analysis of Background Music's Characteristics

This study conducts a content analysis of the characteristics of the background music in *People's Daily's* short videos on Douyin. Through the analysis of the samples, the basic characteristics of the background music are thus summarized. There are generally six music styles: a. resounding and exciting; b. soothing and smooth; c. sad and poignant; d. cheerful and joyful; e. majestic and magnificent; f. tense and depressing (see Figure 1).

Furthermore, two music genres are found, namely red classic music and pop music (see Figure 2). Red classic music refers to the positive, excellent classic music with specific time characteristics, while popular music encompasses all music that is popular in content, lively in form, and sincere in emotion. It is loved by the masses and is widely

sung or appreciated. Moreover, the intensity of the emotion expressed in the music is simply divided into two types: strong and weak (see Figure 3).

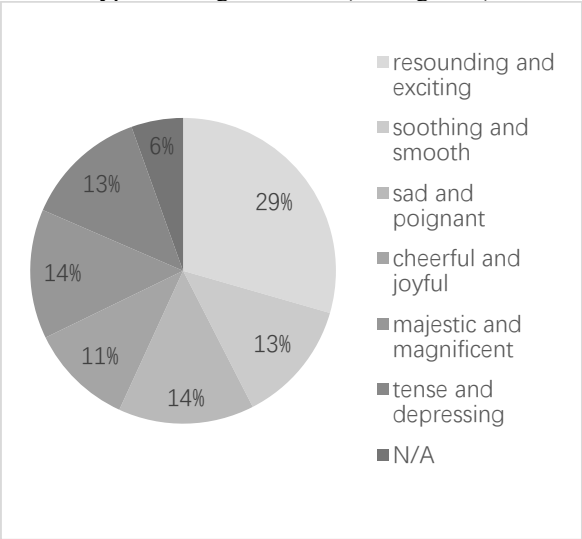


Fig. 1. Music styles

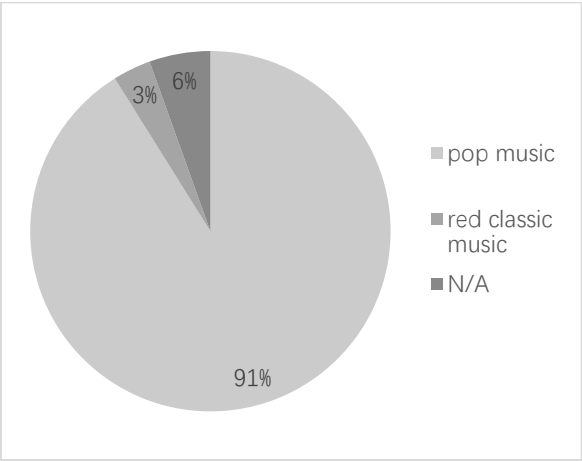


Fig. 2. Music genres

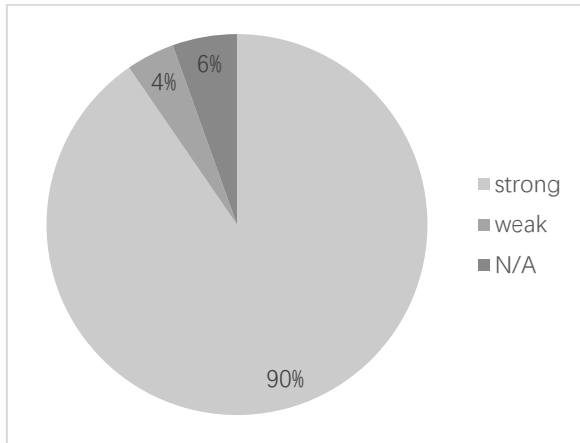


Fig. 3. Emotion in music

Note: There are three types of background music in the sample that cannot be identified, so the total number of valid videos is 147; “N/A” in the chart means that the short videos are not set to music.

The characteristics of the background music are summarized as follows. The music styles are diversified ranging from resounding music to depressing music. Among them, resounding music is mostly used, about 30%, while other styles of music account for around 13% respectively. An overwhelming majority of the music, above 90%, expresses strong emotion, and this emotion is normally expressed through pop music.

2.2 Background Music Has a Strong Emotional Impact

The background music of *People’s Daily’s* short videos on Douyin can effectively promote the emotional expression of the content and further has a strong emotional influence on audiences.

According to Figure 3 above, it can be seen that background music with a strong emotional driving force accounts for the majority, about 90%, and most of them could promote emotional expression. For example, among the 147 videos, the song *Exploding Tensions* appeared five times and all of them appeared in the videos about social news. In this research, the background music is various and no more than ten songs are used repeatedly. Thus, this song is representative and impressive. Specifically, three of them appear in the news about the “Tangshan beating incident”; one of them appears in the news about the “Beijing epidemic-related bar”; and one of them appears in the report about “disaster”. The events involved are all emergencies, and the style of the music is also depressing and tense. So the background music matches the specific content of the videos and can play an obvious role in driving the audiences’ emotions.

The questionnaire statistics show that about 88% of the respondents believe that the background music of the short videos of *People’s Daily* on Douyin has a strong emotional driving force. About 87% of them believe that the background music promotes

the emotional expression of the short videos while only around 13% find that it has no emotional effect or even weakens the expression. The questionnaire statistics further point out that 77% of people say that they are impressed by the background music, while the remaining 23% deny its impact. In other words, the background music not only effectively promotes the overall emotional expression of the short videos but also leaves a deeper impression on audiences.

2.3 Background Music Can Facilitate Audiences' Understanding of Short Videos' Content

With the help of background music, the videos of *People's Daily* form a certain news framework, which makes it easy for audiences to accept information transmitted by it. Two aspects are involved: the themes of the short videos and their corresponding music styles. The themes of the short videos are mostly about social news, accounting for 70%, but the specific content of these videos is very diversified. In order to match this content, a total of 84 different songs are used in these 147 short videos, excluding the eight without background music.

Correspondingly, most of the audiences also think that the background music is resounding and exciting, accounting for about 61%. This indicates that there is a certain deviation between the audience frame and its actual news frame, namely between audiences' interpretation of news and the presentation of news. However, background music can still effectively enhance the communication effect to a certain extent, because about 68% of people think the style of background music can promote their own understanding of the videos' content. For example, the background music *Farewell* was used four times in 147 Douyin short videos, namely, in the videos of remembrance of Zou Jing, academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, famous songwriter Qiao Yu, and famous artist Lan Tianye. The melody of this music is long and soothing and reveals sorrow, echoing the content, so that users can understand the meaning of the videos' content more quickly.

2.4 The Type of Background Music Affects the Audiences' Interest in Watching Short Videos

The music genre used in the short videos of *People's Daily* on Douyin is mainly pop music, but audiences generally have a stereotype of the newspaper, which reduces the effectiveness of its content communication on Douyin to a certain extent. Pop music and red classic music account for about 91% and 9% respectively. However, after analyzing the questionnaire, the research finds that about 70% of the respondents consider the background music to be red classic music. This illustrates that although the majority of the background music is pop music, it is still difficult to change the official media's serious image in the users' perception.

Regarding audiences' preference, about 84% of the respondents prefer to listen to pop music, while only about 16% of them prefer red classic music. This shows that the audiences' favorite music genre matches the main music genre of the *People's Daily's* short videos on Douyin. According to the questionnaire, about 39% of respondents who

like to listen to pop music say that they would be less interested in watching short videos on Douyin if the genre of background music is changed to red classic music. Similarly, about 46% of the respondents who like to listen to red classic music said that they would be less interested in watching it if the genre is changed to pop music. This suggests that the type of music in the background has an effect on the audiences' interest in watching short videos.

However, among the two different music genres, about 61% and 54% of the audiences respectively think that the change in music genre would not reduce their interest in watching short videos on Douyin. Based on the demographic analysis of the sample in the previous section, the reason for this may lie in the fact that the ages of the samples are young. Young people aged 18-35 are more adaptable and more receptive to different types of background music.

3 Conclusion

This paper discusses the influence of background music on the communication effect of the short videos of *People's Daily* on Douyin. There are three points in terms of the final conclusion. In the first place, the styles of the background music of the short videos are various and they can drive audiences' emotions so that the audiences may be more impressed by the short videos. In the second place, background music helps the short videos construct a certain news frame, including music styles and news themes, which does a favor to the audiences to get the main points more quickly. In the third place, pop music is generally used as background music, but many audiences still consider that *People's Daily* like using red classic music. This kind of stereotype may reduce the communication effectiveness of *People's Daily's* short videos on Douyin.

This research can be a valuable reference to other mainstream media when they choose background music on Douyin, but it still has some defects. Because of the time limit, the questionnaires are not issued randomly and the samples are mostly young people. Future research may expand the study to other Douyin accounts of mainstream media and collect the questionnaires randomly from different groups.

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