

Study on the Influence of Short Video Platforms on the Development Trend of Social Hot Topics: A Case Study of Douyin

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Abstract: With the rapid advancement of Internet technology, short video platforms such as TikTok have emerged as significant channels for users to access information, entertainment, and social networking. This paper examines the TikTok platform to investigate its impact on the development trends of social hot topics. The study reveals that the high interactivity and immediacy of the TikTok platform facilitate the rapid dissemination of trending topics, while increased user engagement further accelerates this process. Moreover, TikTok's content recommendation algorithm plays a pivotal role in spreading these topics by precisely reaching target audiences. Through empirical analysis, this paper elucidates the mechanisms and influence pathways of the TikTok platform in the communication of social hot topics, providing a scientific foundation for governments, media outlets, and various sectors of society to effectively utilize and manage short video platforms, thereby promoting healthy social information dissemination. The findings indicate that optimizing the content recommendation algorithm can significantly enhance user satisfaction and positively impact societal outcomes.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the rapid advancement of Internet technology, social media platforms have assumed an increasingly significant role in people's daily lives. Notably, short video platforms such as TikTok have emerged as crucial channels for users to access information, and entertainment, and engage in social interactions. In China, the number of short video platform users has surpassed 850 million, with over 600 million monthly active users on Douyin alone (China Network Audiovisual Program Service Association, 2021). This substantial user base positions short video platforms as pivotal conduits for the dissemination of social hot topics.

As society and the economy rapidly develop and people's living standards improve, the public's demand for information increases. Short video platforms, with their high interactivity and immediacy, can quickly capture and disseminate social hot topics, thus significantly influencing public opinion. Short video platforms have become one of the essential sources for users to obtain news and information.

Although short video platforms have achieved great success worldwide and profoundly changed the

way people socialize, entertain, and access information, research on the development trend of hot topics in society is still in the preliminary stage. Most of the existing studies focus on the economic effects of short video platforms, user behavior analysis, platform content governance algorithm design, etc. Few studies specifically discuss the mechanism of short video platforms on the spread, evolution, and social impact of social hot topics.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of short video platforms, especially TikTok, in the communication of social hot topics, and to supplement the gaps in existing studies, focusing on the following aspects: the communication mechanism of short video platforms, the communication path and characteristics of social hot topics, and the impact of short video platforms on social cognition and public opinion. It will reveal the role of the TikTok platform in the formation and expansion of social hot topics, and explore its potential impact on social cognition and public opinion guidance.

2 THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHORT VIDEO PLATFORM

2.1 The Development of a Short Video Platform

The rise of short video platforms is closely related to the popularity of mobile Internet and the widespread use of smartphones. The development of mobile Internet and artificial intelligence technology provides technical support for the layout of short news videos by traditional media and accelerates the development and popularization of intelligent terminals. Netizens gradually converge on mobile terminals, the habit of mobile Internet access has been formed, and the demand for fragmented reading is high, so short videos have become the favored consumption form of users (Le & Gao, 2018). TikTok launched in China in 2016 and quickly attracted a large number of users. Tiktok's success lies not only in its simple interface and rich features but also in its high degree of user interaction and personalized recommendation mechanism. With the success of Douyin in the Chinese market, other short video platforms such as Kuaishou and B station have also risen rapidly, forming a competitive market pattern.

As of 2023, Douyin has more than 600 million monthly active users, making it one of the world's largest short video platforms. Tiktok's success is not only in the Chinese market but also in the rapid expansion of the world. TikTok has also surpassed 1 billion users in international markets, making it one of the most used social media platforms in the world. The rapid growth of short video platform users reflects its great potential in the field of information dissemination and entertainment.

TikTok is not only a huge success in the Chinese market, but it is also expanding rapidly around the world. Sensor Tower Store intelligence platform data shows that as of December 15, 2020, the top 10 entertainment apps in the global user spending total revenue in the App Store and Google Play reached \$5.82 billion, an increase of 61.8%. In terms of user spending, TikTok and Tikyin topped the global entertainment app revenue list with an estimated revenue of \$1.26 billion, an increase of 590% from 2019 (China Network Audiovisual Program Service Association, 2021). TikTok's success also lies in its diverse user base, which attracts users of different ages and cultural backgrounds.

2.2 Short Video Platform Features

2.2.1 Rich in Content

The content on the short video platform is rich and diverse, covering many fields such as entertainment, education, news, and life. Users can obtain various types of information through the short video platform to meet the needs of different users. For example, the content on TikTok includes music and dance, funny jokes, life tips, news reports, etc., which users can choose to watch according to their interests.

2.2.2 Strong Interaction

The interactive nature of the short video platform is reflected in that users can interact with the content through likes, comments, sharing, and other ways, which enhances user participation. This interaction not only improves the stickiness of users to the platform but also promotes the spread of social hot topics. In the process of interaction, users can express their views, communicate with other users, and form a community atmosphere.

2.2.3 Personalized Recommendation

The running logic of the algorithm is based on the values of the "spokesperson", and the algorithm executes the will of the "spokesperson" (Wen & Xie, 2020). Short video platforms recommend personalized content for users through an algorithmic recommendation mechanism, which improves user stickiness. Based on the user's viewing history, interest preferences, social relationships, and other data, the platform recommends content that meets the user's interests. This personalized recommendation mechanism not only improves the viewing experience of users but also promotes the diversity and innovation of content.

2.2.4 Instantaneity

The content on the short video platform is updated quickly, and hot topics can spread rapidly. The core scene of major events can be presented for the first time in a short video, and users can obtain the latest information in real time and participate in the discussion of hot topics (Zhang & Peng, 2019). This immediacy makes short video platforms an important channel for information dissemination, which has a significant impact on the development of social hot topics.

2.2.5 Low Barrier to Entry

Tiktok App is simple to use and easy to learn, and there is no complicated use process. The "low threshold" provides convenience for the growth of active users of TikTok. The interactive interface of TikTok is mainly black, white, and gray, and the video is played on full screen. The function keys are mainly distributed on the edge of the screen, and the actions such as "like", "comment" and "forward" can be easily completed by double-clicking the screen. The user has a good sense of use and experience (Wang & Xie, 2022). The low threshold of short video platforms makes it easy for users to create and share short videos, lowering the threshold of content creation. Users only need a smartphone to shoot and upload short videos. This low threshold not only attracts a large number of users but also promotes diversity and innovation in content. Users can express their views and share their lives through the short video platform, forming a unique community culture.

3 INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOPIC

3.1 Positive Influence

3.1.1 Information Travels Fast

The immediacy and interaction of short video platforms make social hot topics spread quickly and improve the efficiency of information dissemination. Users can get the latest information in real-time and participate in the discussion of hot topics through the short video platform. This rapid information dissemination mechanism not only improves the efficiency of information dissemination but also promotes the wide dissemination of social hot topics.

3.1.2 High User Engagement

The short video platform is highly interactive, and users can actively participate in the discussion of hot topics using liking, commenting, sharing, etc., which enhances the influence of social hot topics. In the process of interaction, users can express their views, communicate with other users, and form a community atmosphere. This high level of engagement not only increases user stickiness but also promotes diversity and in-depth discussion of hot topics in society.

3.1.3 Content Diversity

The content on the short video platform is rich and diverse, which can meet the needs of different users and promote multi-angle discussions on social hot topics. Users can obtain various types of information through the short video platform, including entertainment, education, news, life, and other fields. This content diversity not only improves the viewing experience of users but also promotes multi-angle discussions on hot topics in society, improving the depth and breadth of topics.

3.1.4 Strong Social Mobilization Ability

Short video platforms can mobilize users to participate in social activities and public welfare undertakings and enhance social cohesion. Users can understand and participate in various social activities through the short video platform, such as public welfare activities, charitable donations, volunteer services, etc. This social mobilization capacity not only increases user engagement but also promotes the healthy development of society. For example, the Happy Rural Plan, helps the country to target poverty alleviation and promote rural revitalization. According to Kuaishou statistics, Kuaishou active users account for 20% of the total number of existing 832 impoverished counties in the country. This means that one out of every five people in these poor counties has an active Kuaishou user. In 2017, roughly 50,000 people earned more than the national poverty alleviation standard through Kuaishou (Hou, 2019).

3.2 Negative Influence

Although the short video platform has played a positive role in the dissemination of social hot topics, its negative impact can not be ignored. This section will analyze the possible problems and challenges of short video platforms in the dissemination of social hot topics, and explore its potential negative impact on social cognition and public opinion.

3.2.1 Information Overload

Because of the huge amount of information on short video platforms, users are prone to information overload and it is difficult to screen out high-quality information. The threshold for creating short video content produced by users is relatively low, which is not limited by the professional ability, location, space, or field of the blogger. The value shaping of short videos is uneven and the content is highly

homogenous. The open comment interaction environment sets up controversial topics, and the emotional reactions of users are inconsistent with their cognitive expectations (Chen et al, 2002). When faced with a large amount of information, users may feel confused and tired, and it is difficult to discern which information is true and reliable. This information overload not only affects the user experience but also may lead to a decrease in user dependence on the platform.

3.2.2 Limitations of Algorithm Recommendations

The algorithm recommendation mechanism may lead to the information cocoon effect, where users can only see the content they are interested in, limiting the diversity of information. By tailoring content to individual preferences, algorithms can reinforce existing beliefs and attitudes, potentially leading to greater polarization and a lack of exposure to alternative viewpoints (Jia & Zhang, 2020). Although this personalized recommendation mechanism improves the user's viewing experience, it may also cause users to fall into an information cocoon, and it is difficult to access different views and information.

3.2.3 Spreading Negative Information

Negative information and false information on short video platforms are easy to spread quickly, affecting the healthy development of public opinion. The content posted by users on the platform may have problems such as false information, negative emotions, vulgar content, etc. The spread of negative information through personalized recommendations can have adverse mental health impacts on users, including increased anxiety and stress. The constant exposure to sensationalized and emotionally charged content can contribute to a heightened state of emotional arousal, which may lead to chronic stress and anxiety disorders (Jia & Zhang, 2020). The rapid spread of this negative information not only affects the healthy development of public opinion but also may lead to the intensification of social contradictions.

3.2.4 User Privacy Issues

When short video platforms collect and use user data, there is a risk of user privacy disclosure. To provide personalized recommendations and advertising, platforms need to collect a large amount of data about users, including viewing history, interest preferences, social relationships, and so on. The collection and use

of these data have the risk of user privacy disclosure, which may affect the security of users' personal information. TikTok, like many other social media platforms, shares user data with third-party advertisers and partners, which can lead to privacy risks and potential data breaches (Spiekermann & Schreck, 2020).

4 SUGGESTION

4.1 Recommendations for Policy Makers

Policymakers should formulate and improve relevant laws and regulations, strengthen supervision of short video platforms, and ensure the healthy and orderly dissemination of information. A comprehensive regulatory framework is essential to balance innovation and user safety. This framework should clear both national and international regulations, industry standards, and platform-specific policies. Policy makers should clarify the responsibilities and obligations of platforms, strengthen the supervision of platform content, and ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of platform content (VanDerWerff & Hancock, 2020). At the same time, policymakers should establish a cross-departmental supervision mechanism to ensure the effectiveness and coordination of supervision.

Policymakers should encourage short video platforms to establish an industry self-discipline mechanism and strengthen self-regulation and self-restraint. Through organizations such as industry associations, policymakers can promote the platform to establish industry standards and self-discipline mechanisms to jointly maintain the healthy development of the industry. At the same time, policymakers should strengthen the supervision of the industry self-regulatory mechanism to ensure the effectiveness and fairness of the self-regulatory mechanism.

4.2 Recommendations for Platform Operators

4.2.1 Optimization Algorithm Recommendation Mechanism

Platform operators should optimize the algorithm recommendation mechanism, balance personalized recommendation and information diversity, and reduce the information cocoon effect. The platform

can ensure that users are exposed to different views and information by introducing a variety of recommendation algorithms. At the same time, the platform should strengthen the review of the recommended content to ensure the authenticity and legitimacy of the recommended content.

4.2.2 Strengthen Content Review

Platform operators should establish a sound content review mechanism to detect and deal with false information and negative content promptly. Platforms must balance the need for strict moderation with the desire to foster a vibrant and engaging community (VanDerWerff & Hancock, 2020). The platform can enhance the review of content by introducing a combination of artificial intelligence and human review. At the same time, the platform should establish a reporting and feedback mechanism, encourage users to participate in content review, and jointly maintain the healthy environment of the platform.

4.2.3 Improve User Privacy Protection

Platform operators should strengthen the protection of user data to ensure that user privacy is not disclosed. The Platform shall strictly abide by relevant laws and regulations and establish a sound data protection mechanism to ensure the security and privacy of user data. TikTok and other short-form Video Platforms must comply with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, to ensure user privacy (Spiekermann & Schreck, 2020). At the same time, the platform should be transparent about the process of data collection and use to enhance the sense of trust of users.

4.2.4 Provide High-Quality Content

Platform operators should encourage users to create high-quality and valuable content to improve the overall content quality of the platform. Platforms can incentivize creators to produce high-quality content through rewards, recognition, and increased visibility to improve users' creative enthusiasm (VanDerWerff & Hancock, 2020). At the same time, the platform should strengthen training and support for content creators to help them improve their ability to create content.

4.3 Advice for Media Practitioners

4.3.1 Use Short Video Platforms to Spread Positive Energy

Media professionals should actively utilize short video platforms to disseminate positive information and promote positive energy, thereby enhancing the impact and reach of news reporting. They can release high-quality news stories and public welfare content on these platforms to capture users' attention and engagement. Additionally, media professionals should enhance their skills and strategies in using short video platforms to maximize the effectiveness of content dissemination. For instance, research indicates that TikTok has been increasingly featuring family-related elements, promoting filial piety, respect for elders, and inheriting the excellent traditional culture and virtues of the Chinese nation over the past two years. The number of such videos and their influence in spreading and guiding positive social values are on the rise (Zhang & Mao, 2018).

4.3.2 Strengthen Content Review

When publishing content, media practitioners should strictly review the authenticity and legality of the content and avoid spreading false information and negative content. Media practitioners should establish a sound content review mechanism to ensure the authenticity and legality of published content. At the same time, media practitioners should strengthen cooperation with the platform to jointly maintain the healthy environment of the platform.

4.3.3 Interaction and Feedback

Media practitioners should establish a good interactive relationship with users, respond to users' feedback and suggestions promptly, and improve the interaction and participation of content. Media practitioners can interact with users through comments, private messages, etc., to understand the needs and opinions of users. At the same time, media practitioners should establish a feedback mechanism to deal with users' feedback and suggestions promptly to improve user satisfaction.

5 CONCLUSION

This study explores the impact of short video platforms on social hot topic trends, using TikTok as an example. By analyzing platform content and

observing user interaction data, the following key conclusions are drawn:

Short video platforms accelerate the rapid dissemination of hot topics through personalized recommendation algorithms and a massive user base. These platforms not only make social events and topics go viral but also shape public attention and cognition to some extent.

While short video platforms like TikTok can quickly increase the exposure of hot topics, the rapid content updates and entertainment nature may weaken in-depth discussions and rational debates. Additionally, excessive hype around certain topics may trigger social anxiety or lead to misleading public opinions. Therefore, while exerting influence, platforms should also better balance content authenticity and social responsibility.

Overall, short video platforms like TikTok provide a broad discussion forum for social hot topics, shaping their dissemination paths and public sentiments to a certain degree. In the future, as these platforms evolve, their influence on social hot topics will become even more profound, and their responsibilities in optimizing algorithms, managing content, and guiding social discussions will become more prominent.

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