The Dissemination and Influence of Visual Culture, Taking TikTok as an Example

Xiaowei Nie[1,a,*]

[1]*Department of Human and Social Futures, The University of Newcastle Australia, 100 Victoria, Street #13-01/02, National Library Building, Singapore 188064*
a. Xiaowei.Nie@uon.edu.au
corresponding author

Abstract: With the accelerated pace of people's lives and the use of short videos in fragmented time, the development of short videos is accelerated and TikTok stands out among many video platforms. From the perspective of visual culture communication, this essay analyzes the reasons for the popularity of TikTok short videos from three aspects: the relationship between short videos and visual culture, the communication characteristics of TikTok, and the communication effect of TikTok short videos. It also summarizes the current problems and challenges of TikTok to provide reference to short video development by using an analysis model called SWOT, namely strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Based on the background of visual culture communication, this essay first conducts an extensive search and collation of related theories and then conducts research on the communication effects and characteristics of TikTok short videos. This essay concludes that TikTok is characterized by its "swiping" browsing style, diversification of dissemination channels, and development of originality and innovation. Furthermore, the improvement of TikTok's short video communication effect is mainly attributed to its content and form. Based on this, this essay gives targeted strategies and suggestions, including internal optimization of TikTok short videos, diversification of communication channels, and enhancement of video auditing.

Keywords: visual culture communication, TikTok, SWOT analysis

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of short videos, TikTok has emerged among many short video platforms. After the exploding growth and development of TikTok, some researchers have found that the short video industry is gradually saturated; the content is biased toward entertainment; the auditing system is not strict; the users' experience is not increased. All these require TikTok to make new strategic choices in line with the current situation. However, the choice of different strategies and measures still lacks a unified explanation.

How TikTok spreads in the field of visual culture is a hot topic in short video development, and the development of TikTok will also increasingly have a positive impact on short video development. Zeng Runxi and Mo Minli in their research pointed out the difference in the dissemination effect of the short video platform but they did not consider the practical application of TikTok [1]. This essay is based on the current situation of TikTok development and adopts the perspective of the

communication effect. It explores the advantages of the communication effect of TikTok and the diversification of communication channels. Furthermore, it makes suggestions for short video development based on the problems and challenges.

This research uses examples to analyze the diversification of communication channels in terms of TikTok's operations. According to the SWOT analysis model, it analyzes TikTok's development in four different dimensions, namely strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Through the SWOT matrix, it identifies relevant strategic initiatives and tries to figure out the strategic deployment that is suitable for TikTok's current development. It argues that TikTok is becoming increasingly promising thanks to its powerful technology and abundance of resources, and diversification and reversal strategies are more appropriate for it. Innovation and content are the prerequisites for TikTok's development.

2. Short Video Communication in the Field of Visual Culture

Visual culture is a cultural form formed by visual media communication, as opposed to a linguistic culture centered on linguistic symbols [2]. Visual culture is a new communication form and promotes the formation of a new communication concept. As a kind of visual culture, short video attracts users with the mode of visual and auditory integration. It is a kind of interactive medium for exchanging information between different people in real time. With the rapid development of Internet technology, traditional media, such as text, pictures, and long videos, can no longer meet the needs of the audience. In contrast, the public readily accepts the visual impact and sensory enjoyment brought by brief videos. TikTok is a hot short video creation and sharing platform. "TikTok records the excellent life" is TikTok's slogan. Short videos are a shared cultural phenomenon produced by universal participation.

TikTok has not only a large number of creators and sharers but also some traditional media who have entered TikTok during the transition period of structural adjustment. TikTok has also many local media. In June 2019, TikTok announced that its daily activity was more than 150 million. According to the 43rd China Internet Network Development Statistics Report issued by China Internet Network Information Center, as of the end of December 2018, the number of short videos netizens was 648 million, accounting for 78.2% of all netizens [3]. TikTok short videos use the shortest time, 15 seconds to make the theme prominent and distinctive and provide audiences with leisure and entertainment in their leisure time. TikTok meets the emotional needs of users for entertainment and debris through the output of high-quality short videos. At present, TikTok is developing rapidly in China and abroad. How to "stand out" in the short video industry so as to have a better communication effect, has become a new challenge for the development of TikTok. What is the communication trend of TikTok short videos under visual culture communication?

3. TikTok's Technology and Visual Media Integration

3.1. Communication Trend: "Swiping"

TikTok short videos use algorithmic recommendations and artificial selection of the recommendation mechanism. Through manual selection by "swiping", TikTok can provide more similar types of short videos. TikTok short videos adjust themselves according to the content users like, usually with two modules: interested and uninterested. When a viewer "swipe" a 15-second video and like it, the video will be played in full and repeatedly played later. When the viewer "swipe" up a video that he is not interested in, he can choose to skip it.

3.2. Diversification of Dissemination Channels

In the new media era, the short video field should be more diversified. TikTok operation is mainly divided into internal process and external procedure; internal function is primarily for hotspots, star traffic, and support for celebrities. For example, TikTok users post various photos of the restaurant Haidilao Hot Pot to enhance visibility, promote customers' first impressions, encourage consumption, and promote the brand [4].

An external operation is a business that works in partnership with well-known brands to carry out operational tasks like sponsorship, advertising, and visibility-boosting activities. For example, TikTok's cooperation with tea, which is promoted by shooting relevant videos, enjoys the benefits of TikTok's platform and has the effect of widening the communication channels. In 2017, TikTok sponsored a program named *China's Hip Hop* and in 2021, TikTok advertised through the program *China's New Rap*. TikTok can enhance not only the public's attention but also the show's ratings.

3.3. Development of Originality and Innovation

With the characteristics of short time, fragmentation, and mobility, TikTok has entered the era of short videos, relying on the general trend of Internet development. Due to the sporadic nature of short video distribution, the challenge of creating high-quality, attention-grabbing content in only 15 seconds warrants extensive investigation and analysis.

These characteristics require video producers to concentrate on developing their visual communication abilities, using filters and special effects to package their work, mastering screen editing time, and showcasing their ideas and strengths. For example, the *People's Daily*, the largest official newspaper in China on TikTok edits news articles in 30 seconds or 60 seconds to reach wider audiences and provides daily real-time updates on the novel coronavirus epidemic during the outbreak. The news was covered by both the traditional media and the short-form video platform at the same time, resulting in more thorough reporting. The creator can start with the content and form at the same time. Different editing styles present different effects. In the production of TikTok short videos, the use of a simple rhythmic soundtrack and a connotative copy can make users express their purpose, making the videos' content richer.

4. How to Further Improve the Dissemination Effect of Short Video on TikTok?

In the competitive short video market, if TikTok wants to develop and not be eliminated, innovation is necessary. The short video industry should have a differentiation strategy if it wants to further improve the communication effect. For TikTok, the differentiation strategy includes two aspects: content and form.

4.1. Content

The effectiveness of dissemination depends on the quality of content, and TikTok insists that "content is king". TikTok uses various techniques when filming short videos, including music, special effects, subtitles, and filters to satisfy users' need for expression [5]. Users can like, comment on, and forward videos to achieve freedom of social communication, and these features can satisfy users' social desires. By delving further into the well-liked challenge section, TikTok draws users of various ages to participate. The famous challenge area can be divided into dance, singing, and joke player challenge, which can effectively attract users with different specialties and make TikTok short videos spread more widely.

Many people describe the content of the short video as "magical" and "creative". TikTok selects songs from internal sources and shoots short videos of 15 or 60 seconds to produce its works.

Different effects combined with filters can take short video content up a notch [6]. Gesture dance is unprecedentedly popular on TikTok, and many users have followed suit, like the popular seaweed dance, letting many users experience the "magic" of TikTok. Many users use Video Log to share their lives in short videos, which is a manifestation of "creativity".

4.2. Form

The title is only one of the fundamental ways for viewers to understand the content of the video. TikTok needs to concentrate on visual communication skills in the dissemination process, which can be divided into five categories according to the video production and presentation forms, namely pictures, screen recording, live video, interview, and mixed editing categories. Different thematic content can make TikTok short videos richer and more diverse, and they are also the most essential part of the dissemination process. TikTok further divides the field into dance, music, animation, dialect, and emotion based on their forms. The video content is more refined and attracts more viewers. For example, current affairs news and reports of critical social hotspot events can play a major role in enhancing TikTok users' engagement [7]. As a result, it is clear that videos with different thematic content have various communication effects.

5. SWOT Analysis

5.1. Strengths and Weaknesses

The user range of the TikTok APP is very wide, and according to the 2020 TikTok Data Report, the number of daily active users in China reaches 600 million in 2020, and the average number of daily video searches reaches 400 million [7]. Publishers can get likes and attention from strangers through their homemade videos, expressing their needs in the way of universal participation. The social nature of TikTok can gather users with similar interests. According to Aurora Big Data in 2018, the percentage of TikTok users aged 20 to 24 was 32.8%, and 27.9% of users are 25 to 29 years old [8]. The research report shows that users prefer to watch short video content in fragmented time [9]. TikTok has attracted a large user base by taking advantage of "shortness".

UGC means user-generated videos, which strengthens the user-centered idea that TikTok users record their original videos and then share them on TikTok [10]. TikTok's video content is more diversified and the topics are more extensive with UGC video models, so it fully satisfies the viewing needs of different users. TikTok will be recommended by the Artificial Intelligence engine to different users according to the different tags users follow, their comments and likes on TikTok. TikTok's powerful Artificial Intelligence engine can identify what users are interested in more quickly and accurately, and the number of recommendations will gradually increase, thus overlaying the recommendations and enabling users to have a better experience [11]. By using personalized recommendations, users can find and communicate with like-minded cultural groups on the software.

Videos on TikTok are 15 seconds, 60 seconds, and up to 3 minutes, so a complete event is broken up, making users only receive one-sided information. According to *The 2019 National Study on Internet Use by Minors Internet Use*, 46.2% of minors regularly watch brief videos on the Internet [11]. The lack of value of video content leads to the lack of profound reflection, and therefore TikTok suffers from the resistance of many parents and company managers [9].

TikTok has a lax approval system, making it difficult to filter videos with bad content. Due to the fragmentation of short videos and a large number of users, many vulgar videos spread quickly. TikTok's program audit does not have a complete review system which is mainly an algorithmic audit, supplemented by a manual audit. Due to a large amount of active TikTok users, the manual audit is not enough and, there are often mistakes in the process of program audit. For example, in many cases,

users audit the video by reporting them and other means. Therefore, such a censorship system is not strict and will severely limit TikTok's development.

5.2. Opportunities and Threats

The era of visual culture images has come, and the communication of visual culture has become a subjective demand of mass culture. The qualitative leap in visual technology in contemporary society means that the reading efficiency of images is higher than the extraction of text and sound for users. More people are willing to get entertainment through images, share life through videos, and express themselves through social media. The development of visual technology has played a certain role in promoting short videos, and TikTok can be said to seize the opportunity in the era of visual culture.

With the growing number of mobile Internet users, the high penetration rate of TikTok users has gradually become a trend. According to the survey, TikTok has more than 400 million daily active users, and moreover, the international version of TikTok has more than 500 million monthly active users [10]. TikTok now covers more than 150 countries and is one of the most popular apps in the world [8]. Consequently, TikTok is increasingly becoming a platform for people to communicate and socialize. With the advent of the era of visual culture, the potential of the short video market has attracted many companies to join. For example, *Kuaishou* was gradually replaced by TikTok in 2018. The main reasons are similar functions and the inability to provide better features or elements to attract viewers.

With the arrival of the new media era, the problems of new media are becoming more and more serious, and the government attaches more importance to new media. TikTok should strengthen its role as a gatekeeper to eliminate vulgar tendencies in videos, as national regulatory policies have been standardized with the promulgation of the *Internet Short Video Content Audit Standards Rules* and other higher requirements for video audit.

5.3. Related Strategies Based on SWOT Analysis

As Table 1 shows, TikTok is developing well, and the strategy of diversification is more suitable for the current it.

TikTok should optimize video content and improve ideological value. Content is the king of short video competition, but TikTok's current video content is biased toward entertainment, and vulgar and boring short videos will affect the development and progress of TikTok and content audit can prevent bad information, like obscene and pornographic information. TikTok needs to optimize its content for sustainable development, change the status quo of entertainment, and strive to enhance the value of ideas. Strict auditing procedures can increase content innovation.

The short video sector is increasingly under government regulation. The intensity of manual auditing for TikTok should also be increased as auditing funds are invested more heavily in the premise of ensuring the daily video release volume. TikTok should review all videos and stop the release so that it can further develop.

For TikTok, optimizing the algorithm and data processing and precise content placement for users can keep TikTok from being eliminated. Furthermore, it should enhance the brand value and expand market influence. Among TikTok's strengths, its loyal following and large user base, as well as its fragmentation, allow better brand communication. For example, during the two sessions in 2019, Foreign Minister Wang Yi made remarks on Huawei's lawsuit against the U.S. government, and "not being a silent lamb" became popular on the Internet, generating 828,000 plays on TikTok [8].

Table 1: The SWOT analysis model.

	(Strengths)	(Weaknesses)
	Wide range of users and clear target audience. UGC video mode. Precise Artificial Intelligence engine.	Content is fragmented and entertaining. The video audit system is not strict.
(Opportunities)	SO	WO
The advent of visual culture. The number of short video users is huge in scale.	Take advantage and seize the opportunity. Expand the market scale and refine the precise positioning of users. Enhance brand value and expand market influence.	Take advantage of opportunities and overcome weaknesses. Optimize video content and improve the value of ideas. Strict audit system and strengthen content innovation.
(Threats)	ST	WT
Fierce competition in the short video industry. Standardization of regulatory system.	Leverage advantages and neutralize threats Enhance user stickiness and precise user targeting. Identify sensitive content and enhance audit mechanism.	Withdraw and shrink to avoid risks. Increase audit input and enhance supervision.

6.   Conclusion

This essay mainly analyzes the challenges faced by TikTok short videos under visual culture communication and also discusses the communication trend of TikTok short videos from the perspective of communication effect, including three aspects, namely the development of TikTok's originality, the communication trend of "swiping", and the diversification of communication channels. Based on the four perspectives of SWOT model – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the problems of TikTok are investigated. At the same time, a diversification strategy and a reversal strategy are proposed. Diversification, innovation of original content, promotion of the audit system, and deeper exploration are the most powerful strategies for TikTok.

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