

# ***The Research on the Happiness Brought by Chinese Short Video Software Douyin to Chinese College Students***

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**Abstract:** Douyin is now a popular short video app for Chinese college students. Most Chinese college students watch Douyin for entertainment. So how Douyin brings happiness to college students is worth studying. A questionnaire was made for college students to fill out to help with the study. Through data analysis of the questionnaire results, the conclusions are showed that first Chinese college students are attracted by entertaining videos on Douyin, and they like livestream function of Douyin most, which also brings them happiness. Douyin had become a form of entertainment among college students during the quarantine as well. Furthermore, fragmented video information transmission mode on Douyin makes some students think the joy they get is continuous, while others think it is transient. In addition, most students agree that Douyin is a vulgar way of entertainment, mainly due to the uneven quality of the videos on this platform. Overall, this study presented that Douyin does bring happiness to Chinese college students. However, this kind of video content that brings students happiness is tacky to some extent and has no substantive meaning.

**Keywords:** Douyin, happiness, Chinese college students

## **1. Introduction**

Douyin is a social app for creative music videos produced by ByteDance in Beijing, which was first launched in China in September 2016. It boasts a variety of short form user videos ranging from genres like pranks, stunts, tricks, jokes, dance, and entertainment, with durations ranging from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. TikTok, the international version of Douyin, launched iOS and Android versions in most market outside mainland China in 2017. TikTok only became available globally after it merged with Musical.ly, another Chinese social media service, on August 2, 2018.

In 2016, the emergence of Douyin, the use of algorithms to accurately recommend high-quality video content to users that promoted the rapid growth of short video market advertising size. With the launch of Watermelon videos and Good-looking videos in China in 2017, the market size of short video industry increased to 5.53 billion yuan, with an increase of 191.05%. In 2018, two major head platforms Douyin and Kuaishou have continued to develop, with an explosive growth of 744.67% in market size, generating 46.71 billion yuan. Subsequently, the market pattern of short video gradually stabilized. The user coverage rate continued to increase. The growth rate began to slow down, but the market size continued to rise. By 2021, the market size of short video in China was 291.64 billion yuan.

According to the 49th Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China released by CNNIC, the number of netizens is 1.032 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reaches 73%. As of 2021, there were 934 million short video users in China, and the country's short video penetration rate was 90%. For Douyin, it has more than 700 million daily active users by 2021. Young people between the ages of 19 and 30 account for the largest proportion of Douyin's users. They are up to 46.5 %. With such a large user base, ByteDance's full-year revenue in 2021 was about 367.8 billion yuan. Among them, commercial advertising revenue was about 250-billion-yuan, live broadcasting revenue was about 60 billion yuan to 70 yuan, and the rest was overseas and other income. The prospect of such an exceptional revenue, at the same time let Douyin won many awards. When releasing nine fashion honors at the 2021 China Fashion Gala, Douyin received special honor from the organizing committee for Fashion Agency Achievement of the Year. In June 2022, Douyin was ranked 53rd in the 2022 BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands.

From the data of user group, it is not difficult to see that young people take up the highest proportion of Douyin. Especially for college students today, Douyin is another way for them to connect online. College students can send interesting videos to each other through Douyin private chat to bring some fun to their daily lives. Many of the videos on Douyin are of somewhat entertaining nature. For example, Douyin videos have clips from variety shows or reality shows, street interviews ask intriguing questions of passers-by, some bloggers shoot funny clips from daily life, and those specializing in situational humor. These kinds of entertainment videos have attracted many Chinese college students to watch them.

## 2. Literature Review

In the case of Douyin software being used by many young people in China, many scholars have taken Douyin short video as an example to study the effect of short videos on them. According to Zhang, internet video platforms have gradually become the main way for young people to obtain entertainment and information in their spare time [1]. Brown, Pini and Pavlidis put forward that when social event occurs, TikTok (international version of Douyin) gives young people space to show complex feelings through humor, whimsy, and juxtaposition, which makes it a platform for them to express themselves [2]. Besides, Burton shows that young people use Douyin to "define themselves and their experiences in relation to specific perceptions of the state of the world around them [3]." Schulz and Guynn give an idea that many young people use TikTok as a search engine [4]. They provide that young people are using this short-form video app to find a new lunch spot, plan a weekend getaway, or update their closets like they use Google [4]. Because young people think TikTok's search results are more visual and authentic [4].

Many scholars have also studied the entertainment function of Douyin. Xu analyzed that Douyin short video platform uses the sensory stimulation and novelty brought by entertaining video content to catch the eye of target audiences [5]. Most of Douyin short videos are inherently entertaining. Meng and Leung proposed that TikTok is a virtual playground that let users create 15-second looping videos with advanced editing capabilities [6]. TikTok enhances the fun through image-tracking and augmented reality's ability to shape imagined images as well. Omar and Dequan found that Douyin encourages users to send instant messages, comment on videos they watch, and like them [7]. This helps to facilitate social interaction and allows people to entertain on Douyin. They also found that escapism motivation is a factor for people to use Douyin [7]. In this context, the actual meaning of escapism is that people can have a pleasant rest time by watching some funny short videos from their busy study and work life.

For college students, the happiness elements contained in Douyin play a big role in their motivation to use it. Kitterman offered that according to SEMrush, popular videos on TikTok are most likely cause joy (58%) and surprise (24%). Only 9 percent of popular videos caused outrage, and 4 percent

made viewers sad [8]. Peña-Fernández, Larrondo-Ureta and Morales-i-Gras found that TikTok entertainment content specifically aimed at young people has achieved very high virality and user engagement rates [9]. The entertainment in Douyin is very attractive to young people. Wu presented that celebrities using Douyin to post videos had increased its popularity [10]. Especially for some students who are big fans of the celebrities. They will feel very excited to see their favorite stars posting Douyin videos.

Wu also suggested that Douyin works with variety shows to attract users [10]. She gave an example that in August 2017, Douyin worked with the music variety show “The Rap of China”, which gave the show a platform to share music and imitate hip-pop songs [10]. Students who really like the show can have fun lip-synching or singing along to hip-pop music on Douyin. Wu found that the challenge tool in Douyin can motivate creation [10]. With the help of hashtags, Douyin organizes videos into categories and challenges users to produce content using its hashtags. Users can start challenges, which are shown and ranked based on their popularity and level of engagement [10]. Challenges include some gesture dancing, live PK and more, and they all have a certain amount of buzz on Douyin. College students would be interested in these challenges to keep up with the trends on the Internet. Wu mentioned that “TikTok keeps launching unique filters [10].” The same goes for the Chinese version of Douyin. There are many college students who use Douyin’s funny filters to make amusing short videos. They watch these videos and enjoy the pleasure funny filters bring them.

Those are some studies done by some scholars in the field of Douyin (TikTok) software, but there is still few research on Douyin brings happiness to Chinese college students. Most of them studied the entertainment properties and functions of Douyin itself, and the study on how these functions and properties could bring joy to Chinese college students is also important. Because Douyin short video software is one of the main ways for college students to have fun in this Internet age. To achieve the research purpose, a questionnaire is developed for Chinese college students to complete.

### 3. Methodology

The method of this study is quantitative research, and the survey approach is to distribute questionnaires. This questionnaire is suitable for research on the happiness of Chinese students brought by short video software Douyin. The online questionnaire is created by using Chinese online survey platform called “Wanjuan.com”. The questionnaire content into a QR code published on the website of Chinese universities. The questionnaire distribution period is one week. A total of 105 questionnaires were collected. There were 105 valid questionnaires. The criterion of invalid questionnaire is the obvious regularity of the answers, for example, all first answers are chosen by a respondent.

### 4. Results

Concerning the kinds of videos that students enjoy watching on Douyin, the funny category accounts for the highest proportion, reaching 72.38%. Beauty, pets, and skills are evenly split at around 47%. Others takes up only 11.43%. It is not hard to see that Chinese college students are more interested in watching funny short videos on Douyin. Regarding the question of Douyin functions can bring college students happiness, more than half of the students chose live streaming, with the highest rate of 52.28%. The functions of private messaging (41.90%) and online shopping (40.95%) are slightly inferior to live streaming. Long video function and Douche attributes 37.14% and 31.43% respectively. Only 15.24% of the students chose co-filming. The others are 7.62%. It can be inferred from this that live streaming function brings the most happiness to Chinese college students.

Discussing the level of preference for various Douyin Live types to college students. The live entertainment is as high as 65.71%. Live shopping (59.05%) was not far behind. Live games occupy

39.05%. The other 7.62%. The results show that Chinese college students prefer entertainment livestreams, which bring them the most pleasure. To examine college students' interest in funny videos on Douyin. Those who really like to watch them accounts for 36.19%, and those who like to watch them takes up the highest percentage (56.19%). Dislike and strongly dislike add up to merely about 7.5%. It is evident that Chinese college students are fond of watching funny videos on Douyin.

For the effect of Douyin on the happiness of college students during their quarantine at schools or home, most people chose a lot (84.77%). Those who chose average reached 14.29%. One person chose very little. With such ratio, Douyin brought a lot of happiness to Chinese college students who had been quarantined at schools or home during the pandemic. Given that whether the happiness Douyin gives college students would last, slightly more people choose to last (55.24%) than to stay short (44.76%). It follows that some students' happiness after watching Douyin is sustainable, but some do not.

In the part of considering alternative ways to engage college students' happiness than Douyin, 55.24% of the students chose to listen to music, 48% of them chose sports and binge-watching. Watching variety shows and hanging out with friends stands for about 43%, and 6.67% of others. This shows that listening to music is now the most popular way for college students to get the same pleasure as watching Douyin. Sports, binge-watching, watching variety shows and hanging out with friends are also important sources of happiness for Chinese college students. While studying students' willingness to share funny videos, a whopping 86.67% said yes. Only 13.33% said no. It reveals that many Chinese college students are willing to share funny videos with others.

When asked about the joy that Douyin offers to college students has a positive or negative effect on their study and life, more than half (63.81%) said positive (this kind of happiness promotes normal study and life, and achieves the combination of work and rest), while 21.9% said negative (indulging in the happiness of Douyin videos but affects the normal study and life). The last 14.29% felt no impact on their daily life. The data gives that Douyin has brought more positive effects to the happiness of Chinese college students. At the same time, some students would be negatively affected which the daily study tasks are delayed. Whether college students agree that watching Douyin videos is a vulgar way of entertainment, 33.33% of the students agreed, 35.24% somewhat agreed and 31.41% disagreed. The total number of students who agree and somewhat agree accounts for 68.57%, so it can be concluded that most Chinese college students generally agree that watching Douyin short videos is a vulgar way of entertainment.

## 5. Discussion

According to the result above, Chinese college students prefer to watch funny short videos on Douyin. As many as 97 out of 105 students chose that they like watching funny videos on Douyin. The reasons for these results are that first the entertaining and humorous nature of funny videos has attracted many college students. Second, college students' study and life are under great pressure. Watching funny videos can make them feel happy and relieve pressure. This has a certain good effect on college students. They can enjoy watching Douyin funny videos, feel relaxed, and have another way of entertainment in their break time from the busy study. Many college students believe that the pleasure of watching Douyin brings positive effects to their daily life, achieving the combination of study and rest. And watching some funny videos can increase students' sense of humor. They are imperceptibly affected by the humorous elements in funny videos. A sense of humor can make a person more charismatic in personality. But watching a lot of funny videos can also have a bad influence on college students. They may have a playful attitude towards something serious. Having too much sense of humor will sometimes turn into sarcasm in inappropriate situations, resulting in a low-quality behavior. The happiness and sense of humor that Douyin's funny short videos bring to Chinese college students can benefit them. After a period of study, students can watch funny videos on Douyin

to relax and entertain. But do not be too addicted to this kind of videos, the reason is that some students still let Douyin have a negative influence on them and indulge in the happiness it gives them. College students should watch Douyin funny short videos in moderation.

Douyin's live streaming function brings the most happiness to Chinese college students. Given that webcasts are very popular right now. Young people, especially college students, like to watch live broadcasts. Network broadcast does have many advantages that young people like. For example, through livestreaming on Douyin, people can interact and chat with others and stars, watch some livestreaming classes to learn, buy off-price merchandise through livestreaming of shopping and so on. Different forms of content on Douyin Live have enriched the life of college students in their spare time. But the live streaming of Douyin e-commerce will give college students the consumer psychology of blindly following the crowd. At present, most live streaming e-commerce companies are propagandized by stars and Internet celebrities, and used fans to attract traffic, which leads to the consumer psychology of blind conformity of college students. Consumption is driven by high consumption output, but this strong situation will lead to the price performance of goods cannot meet the needs of students. They will just follow the trend to buy. It is likely to buy bad products, leading to irrational consumption. Not only will they lose their money, but they will also have no way to meet their needs. And some college students spend a huge amount of money to give gifts in the online celebrities or stars' live broadcast room. Most college students are not financially independent, which makes them spend a lot of their parents' money on gifts. Let students' overall living expenses become tight. To solve these two situations, students cannot blindly buy anything while watching e-commerce live, before buying, students need to look at whether they really need it or not. They are not supposed to covet temporary cheap or follow the trend and waste money. Students should consider their own economic strength when giving gifts to their favorite Internet celebrities or stars. It is not worth spending a lot of money on a virtual gift. Gradually develop a sense of saving money and students will feel less constrained when it comes to buying the things they really need.

Investigating further to the result that Chinese college students like entertainment live streaming the most. Because live entertainment is more fun, students can see people live show talent or chat. And some college students themselves like to do entertainment live broadcast. Most of the live content of college students is interactive chat among many netizens. Although college students enjoy certain pleasure in doing entertaining live broadcast by themselves and can earn some money as living expenses if they do it well, doing live broadcast may affect students' life and rest. College students are busy with their studies during the day, and they will do live broadcasts late at night. It is necessary to have a rest at that time, and bad rest will affect the class status during the day. Secondly, live broadcasting might reduce interest in learning and affect academic performance. When college students are fascinated by livestreaming, even in class, they will think about what to about, what makeup to draw, some issues with livestreaming tipping and so on. To deal with these two problems, Douyin can try to limit college students' livestreaming time. College students also need a certain amount of self-control. Deciding how long the live broadcast will last, so as not to affect their study.

Douyin has brought a lot of happiness to Chinese college students who are in lockdown during the pandemic. During the pandemic in China, students can only take online classes at home or school and are unable to go out to do some extracurricular activities, so watching Douyin short videos has become the main way for college students to have fun outside of study. At the stage when college students cannot go out of school or home, the happiness Douyin gives them can keep them happy to a certain extent. Students who are locked down at school talk to each other about some interesting videos they have seen, and others who are taking online classes at home chat on their mobile phones. There is another phenomenon that most college students are willing to share the funny videos that they see on Douyin with others. Because after seeing funny videos on Douyin, students also want to share their joy to others and promote the friendship between them. These shared videos can become



a topic of conversation among students. Many college students are depressed due to the coronavirus lockdown or online classes at home, so they would continue to use Douyin appropriately and to share the interesting videos with others. Not only do students have a common topic about interesting videos on Douyin, but depression is also alleviated.

Some Chinese college students feel that the happiness brought by Douyin is sustained, while some feel it is transient. Those who think it lasted are slightly higher than who think it is brief. Douyin has a lot of information, and it is fragmented. After watching a short video, people scroll down to the next video unrelated to the previous one. Those who think joy is only temporary just find this short video very interesting and turn to the next one immediately after watching it. They are not impressed by the last funny video. Although some students also receive fragmented video information, they can keep the interesting video content they see in their memory, which brings them lasting joy. Douyin is a good thing for some college students to bring lasting joy, but fragmented video information will have a bad impact on college students. The receiving of fragmented information may make college students accustomed to disorganized input paths, and thus weaken their systematic thinking ability. It is not conducive to the brain's deep thinking. Over time, students will lose even fragmented thinking and become lazy to think. For college students, watching Douyin short videos is one of the ways to have fun in their spare time. College students get the corresponding happiness from watching Douyin by listening to music, doing sports, watching variety shows and so on. Students can get bored watching Douyin all the time. They could make good use of their spare time and spend it on different recreational activities.

Most Chinese college students generally agree that Douyin short videos are a vulgar form of entertainment. But a small number of students do not think so. Because Douyin short video content quality is uneven, the platform is biased towards entertainment. Vulgar videos would simply encourage students to behave in more indecent ways. Students are supposed to watch more high-quality videos on Douyin and pay less attention to vulgar entertainment videos.

## 6. Conclusion

This study is about how Douyin's functions and attributes bring happiness to Chinese college students. The overall conclusion is that first Douyin does bring happiness to Chinese college students. They also like to watch funny videos on Douyin. Douyin has brought students a lot of joy during the pandemic when they have online classes at home or closed school. The depression that made students unable to go out was relieved. Second, the livestream function in Douyin brings the most happiness to Chinese college students. Because there are many kinds of content on Douyin Live, students can watch it for entertainment, study, and shopping. Some students are also like to live broadcast by themselves and feel the fun that it brings to them. Third, some college students think that the happiness Douyin brings them is short lived, while others think it is lasting. This is because Douyin's fragmented video information brings different feelings to different people. Students who feel ephemeral can also get the corresponding happiness that Douyin gives them from other entertainment ways. Finally, most Chinese college students think Douyin is a vulgar form of entertainment. Douyin videos are unbalanced in quality and tend to be entertaining for the public. Most of its short videos do not have any deep meaning.

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