

The Influence of Short Videos' "Pan-Entertainment" Tendency on College Students' Learning and Critical Thinking Abilities

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Abstract: In the era of big data, the rise of short videos makes content production more convenient, and content consumption becomes a new trend. In the meantime, the great enrichment of short video content also exposes the problem of "pan-entertainment". This paper focuses on college students and discusses the adverse effects caused by pan-entertainment on their learning and thinking abilities. An online questionnaire survey is used to collect data from college students. By analyzing their content preference, viewing habits, and attitudes towards short videos, it is concluded that long-term exposure to short video platforms makes students more susceptible to the adverse effects of pan-entertainment. However, short videos have a negative impact on their learning ability and critical thinking, by distracting their attention and limiting their cognition.

Keywords: Short video, Pan-entertainment, College students, Learning ability, Critical thinking

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In a new information era, the rapid development of Internet information technology has not only reshaped people's ways of production and life to some extent but also created various cultural forms with the participation of the public. These cultural forms are quite different from the traditional way of cultural transmission. The cultural products produced by mass media gradually highlight their entertainment aspect, and the seriousness and authenticity of cultural products are reduced. While the national entertainment trend and the Internet celebrity economy develop, some undesirable social problems have also appeared, and the phenomenon of "pan-entertainment" has emerged. Short videos, as a sort of cultural product of the age of the Internet and a current popular culture phenomenon, satisfy people's entertainment needs and are in line with people's fragmented reading habits. Therefore, a study of the characteristics and influences of the pan-entertainment of short videos plays

a very important role in recognizing and resolving the value dilemma of short videos and transforming the social ecology. In the Internet era, influenced by the tendency of pan-entertainment of the network, young college students reject serious and rational thinking and indulge in the virtual entertainment environment. The pan-entertainment tendency of short videos has a great negative impact on the physical and mental health of young college students. It is urgent to further explore effective strategies to resist the harm of the network "pan-entertainment".

1.2. Literature Review

Since 2017, the trend of pan-entertainment in the music field has witnessed a spurt of development of short videos. Since then, a variety of research has focused on the pan-entertainment phenomenon and shown a trend of diversification. Some scholars have early noticed the "pan-recreationalization" phenomenon of network culture [1-4]. Regarding the negative effect of this phenomenon, some of them proposed prevention strategies [5-8]. Moreover, some studies also mentioned the importance of governmental interference which can ensure the regulation of the whole short video industry [9,10]. Finally, the background and the cause of pan-entertainment were also considered [11].

However, current research mostly focuses on the theoretical level and lacks empirical support. Scholars also pay little attention to young college students and specific platforms which show different characteristics of pan-entertainment. Moreover, existing literature on the impact of the research is not comprehensive enough, rarely involving the aspects of individual ability and habits. Based on this context, this paper aims to deal with the following questions: first, what are college students' attitudes towards short videos and the pan-entertainment phenomenon? Second, how does the pan-entertainment tendency on short video platforms influence college students?

1.3. Research Method

The main method used in this paper is a questionnaire survey. With college students as the research object, the questionnaire is designed around the use of short videos and the impact of pan-entertainment on their learning and thinking abilities. A total of 192 questionnaires were collected from microblogs and other platforms, among which 173 are valid. About 66% are women and most of them are sophomores, accounting for 70%. They mainly come from Shanxi, Hubei, Hunan, and Beijing.

The method of snowball sampling is also adopted. Snowball sampling refers to the way of randomly selecting some respondents and then asking them to provide other respondents belonging to the target group of the study. Subsequent surveys are conducted according to the clues provided. The main advantage of snowball sampling is that it can greatly increase the possibility of contacting the group required by research. In public opinion research, it is mainly used to investigate a particular group's opinion. In this paper, college students are the targets.

2. The Interplay between Short Videos and College Students

2.1. Degrees of Impact and Grades

In many cases, the degree of concentration and the ability to distinguish things are closely related to age and experience. Therefore, this paper also considers the different reaction degrees of college students of different grades when they are affected by the media, to observe the role of age in college students' relationship with pan-entertainment content.

Younger respondents, including freshmen and sophomores, tend to be more active in thinking and have a stronger ability to accept new things, but this also means that they may be more likely to fall into the trap of bad content spread by short videos and fall into addiction. When doing things, it is

difficult for them to get rid of the impact of short videos. The respondents involve students of four grades. The mental state of most college students is less affected by media. More than half of the respondents think that short videos have no impact on themselves and they can reduce the symptoms of temporary discomfort by shifting their attention. The important point is that the proportion of college students who feel uncomfortable when sitting decreases with grades, and the proportion of college students who choose "no influence" increases with grades. In the absence of short videos, students from higher grades can better regulate their emotions and rely less on the media.

Regarding the influence on concentration, more than half of the respondents in three grades who choose "not serious" believe that "swiping" short video has an impact on them, and the proportion decreases with grades. At the same time, the proportion of students who choose "serious impact" is low and fluctuates with age. These data show that, on the whole, the higher the grade is, the smaller impact there is. Higher-grade college students have stronger control over themselves and can better resist the adverse effects of short videos.

2.2. The Demand and Market

According to the survey data, there are not many viewers of current affairs news, and even fewer viewers of learning and education materials. The types of short videos most frequently watched by college students mainly includes entertainment, food sharing, beauty and makeup, online celebrities, and live-streaming game. These types of short videos tend to have more entertainment characteristics, which do not consume too much brain power and do not have clear knowledge value. These types of videos can only make people get short audio-visual pleasure in the form of mental stimulation. College students like to seek a quick emotional experience in the mode of constantly scrolling, and those eye-catching videos with exaggerated forms of entertainment are often more attractive to them.

In the practice of short video communication, the audiences' immediate feedback and interaction, as well as their preferences for and habits of receiving information, are all important factors for the successful transmission of a message. In the ranking of content preference of short videos, the category of "entertainment and fun" ranked first, which indicates that college students who are completely willing to or have no clear intention to watch short videos are highly likely to be exposed to pan-entertainment content. According to the survey results, more than half of college students have a clear positive attitude towards short video platforms and hold a neutral attitude towards the pan-entertainment tendency. They neither affirm its novelty nor criticize its vulgar content. The majority of respondents who like short videos even say that the pan-entertainment content of short videos makes them more willing to watch short videos. Most of the respondents who like to watch short videos and have the habit of watching short videos are able to accept and get addicted to the entertainment content. In this case, the content may even be one of the main reasons for the attractiveness of short videos. Moreover, for those college students who dislike short videos, they can hardly accept such extensive entertainment content, and the reason why they have an aversion to short videos is the spread of pan-entertainment content.

At the same time, the phenomenon of "pan-entertainment" in the short video platform continues to expand. On the one hand, it relies on the continuous development of Internet technology, on the other hand, its quick development is closely related to the audiences' great demand for entertainment consumption. The main users of short videos are the new generation represented by the post-90s generation, of which college students take a large proportion. The consumption concept of this group is open, and their consumption ability is strong, with a strong curiosity in pursuing novel things. Their entertainment consumption demand is an important factor in the expansion of the short video "pan-entertainment" phenomenon.

3. Effects of Pan-Entertainment of Short Videos

3.1. The Effect of Long-Term Exposure to Short Video Platforms

As one of the current pop culture phenomena, short videos are the products of entertainment in the we-media era with extensive public participation. Compared with other forms of videos, short videos have a lower threshold in production. The process of production is simple, including shooting, fast scene setting, content editing, and music implantation, so today more and more people are willing to participate in it. The continuous expansion of the scale of users also brings a lot of problems. These users are different in many aspects, such as education level, life experience, and professional background, which leads to the variety of short video forms produced and transmitted by them. According to the survey data, among the several popular short video apps in the current market, TikTok and Kuaishou ranked first and second, respectively, as the most commonly used short video apps by college students. They approach ordinary persons' life in an entertaining way, with content often more accessible. At present, the users of TikTok have shown a trend of younger age. However, under the discourse system of "pan-entertainment", there is a main popular trend that people tend to make anything entertaining, with no respect to history. However, for college students who often use various short video apps, especially TikTok and Kuaishou, there is a great chance that they are already affected by the bad entertainment content.

Regarding the duration and frequency of using short video apps, college students all say that they spend more than 3 hours on various short video apps every day, and some of them even spend more than 5 hours in watching short videos every day. This shows that most college students are immersed in various content spread by short videos for a long time almost every day, and many of them often feel that "hours have passed before they have seen something", which is closely related to the big data algorithm mechanism of the short video platforms. Big data will continuously push the content in which users are interested, according to the types of videos they watch, so that users will gradually get addicted to them. In that sense, many people will be deeply affected by the enormous meaningless content without even knowing it, showing a serious addiction phenomenon. More than half of the people surveyed say they watch short videos in their spare time, such as eating, waiting in line, and taking transportation. The data show that the longer the surveyed college students spend on the short video platforms, the more deeply they are affected by the short videos, like their lifestyle, way of thinking, values, and other aspects. It can be found that short videos occupy most of the fragmented time and even sleeping time. Being surrounded by various entertainment content of short videos for a long time will make them less patient, paralyze themselves, and gradually lose their goals and motivation.

3.2. The Effect on Learning Ability

According to the survey, short videos will make users fall into a "distraction trap". Short videos can provide rich entertainment content in a very short time, which also makes its negative impact on attention more serious. Most college students say that they would pick up their mobile phones to watch short videos when doing something. Most of them believe that watching short videos will affect their attention and distract them, which is also verified by their usage frequency. The data show that their attention span is getting shorter and shorter due to the use of short videos, and they have to pick up their mobile phones in a very short time. A variety of eye-catching entertainment short films on the platforms have re-planned the leisure time of college students. Every period of life is occupied by the short videos on TikTok and Kuaishou. Short videos often lead to students' distraction, which is the root cause of low learning efficiency and quality. According to the in-depth interview, when the interviewees knew that they were wasting time, they could not control their desire to continue to use

the application. When they did not touch their mobile phones, their minds were filled with short video images. Adam Alter, a psychology doctor at Princeton University, coin a term called "behavioral addiction" which refers to an irresistible pleasure for individuals [2]. Although it can solve psychological needs in the short term, it will cause serious harm in the long term.

The interviewees said that they were full of energy when they "swiped" the videos, but they were very depressed and decadent after putting down their mobile phones. This is related to reward feedback that short videos stimulate dopamine in the brain every few seconds. Every time when the interviewees watch a video, their brains will produce some dopamine. After a period of time, their brains will become dependent. Without the stimulation of dopamine, they will feel uncomfortable. This mechanism is similar to smoking and drug addiction. Short videos have an algorithm mechanism. After accumulating personal preference data for a certain period of time, users can continue to see their favorite videos, which has changed the operating mechanism and learning habits of the users' to a certain extent. The maximum duration of a dithering video is 15 seconds. A Canadian research group of Microsoft in the United States pointed out that the actual number is 8 seconds after measuring the brainwaves of more than 2000 experimenters [3].

3.3. The Effect on Critical Thinking

The trend of "entertainment to death" culture brought about by the pan-entertainment phenomenon of short videos can block the pursuit of rational thinking [4]. With the rapid development of short videos, the variety of its content is rapidly growing, from simple entertainment to everything people would need. Nowadays, people can get almost any information on short video platforms. The combination of concentrated scientific knowledge and vivid presentation forms greatly enhances people's interest in learning and brings them a new way to acquire knowledge. However, the expansion of "pan-entertainment" in the field of short videos makes the content more and more entertaining, and low-level entertainment output gradually occupies the market. According to the survey data, the most popular content for college students is some entertainment and funny content mainly in the form of gesture dancing, lip-synching, and thematic challenges. Compared with knowledge videos, the content is simpler in form and brings more sensory stimulation. People can easily get spiritual enjoyment without any deep thinking. The majority of respondents say they do not think or think very often after watching this kind of content. This is because these short videos only enable people to acquire enormous but shallow information in this process. Even if there is content worth pondering and studying, it will be drowned in the push of more information one after another. Short videos of about ten seconds to two minutes enable college students to acquire core information in a very short time, but they lose their deep reflection on the events around them. In the long run, they will only lose their interest in exploring spiritual and cultural life. When deep reading is replaced by shallow video content, and hyperlinks deprive people's intention for thinking, it is inevitable that their overall critical thinking ability will decline.

The survey data also show that short videos have different degrees of influence on the values, lifestyles, study habits, ways of thinking, and interpersonal communication of the interviewed college students. Nearly half of college students believe that short videos have an impact on their way of thinking and agree that the entertainment content of short videos limits their cognition. In the era of big data, each has a personally customized world. Nowadays, short videos have personalized recommendations, which will judge people's preferences based on how long they spend on a video and push content that interests them. Therefore, watching more short videos may mean being more restricted to a certain circle. For example, old people may think that the world is concerned with health and nostalgia for the old times while young people's video world may be full of content related to idols and games. This means that people probably spend a lot of time in getting information from a single point of view. The longer they stay in partial thinking, the more similar hyperlinks are pushed

to them, which will create a closed loop of information. In the end, one's cognition will become more and more limited, and it becomes harder for one to think critically.

4. Conclusion

This paper takes many variables, such as grade, personal attitude, and surrounding environment into consideration. It is found that the unique attributes of short video platforms and the huge entertainment demand of college students are important factors in the continuous development of pan-entertainment in the field of short videos. However, the influx of mass entertainment seriously hinders students from building independent thinking ability. It is necessary for all sectors of society to strengthen mainstream value guidance. Short video platforms should strengthen technical supervision while Internet users should improve their awareness.

There are some limitations in this paper to some extent. The survey lasted for a short period of time, and the sample size was not sufficient enough. However, this research uncovers the influence of short videos on a specific group, namely college students. It can provide empirical support for future research and policy-making. Future research can look deep into the mentalities of these students and consider the positive sides of mass media.

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