

Research on How Dou Yin Micro-Drama Shapes Users' Cultural Identity and Social Behavior

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Abstract: The rise of short videos on platforms like Douyin has significantly impacted cultural identity and social behavior. Current research shows that Dou Yin micro-drama, as a particular media content form, integrates local symbols' power, popular theme elements, and social trends to illuminate cultural identity. Built around the same concept as microfictions, these bite-sized dramas provide users with a relatable struggle in less than 2000 characters, immediately stimulating interest and making cultural points across. By examining the Dou Yin micro-drama, this study reveals how they influence user values and social interactions, providing insights into the platform's role in shaping social behavior in the digital age. It also explores the commodification and entertainment aspects of cultural dissemination, raising concerns about the superficiality of cultural interactions. This study offers valuable insight into how short video platforms enable social interactions and affect users' cultural perceptions and uses case studies as well as a literature review.

Keywords: Dou Yin micro-drama, Cultural identity, Social behavior, Digital culture.

1. Introduction

The advent of the Internet of Things (IoT) has precipitated a rapid transformation in the present modes of living and social interaction. Concurrently, it has also revolutionized the domain of social media, enabling users to swiftly and dependably communicate with one another, connect with individuals from disparate locations and cultural backgrounds, and engage in the exchange of ideas within the public sphere [1].

With the rise of short video platforms like Dou Yin and TikTok, research on their impact on cultural identity and social behavior has gained momentum. While studies have examined how these platforms foster entertainment and connectivity, there is still limited exploration into their influence on users' cultural expression and societal conduct. This gap highlights the need for a more in-depth analysis of how micro-drama content shapes these dynamics. Existing studies have explored social media as entertainment hubs and communication springs that generate substantial content creation; however, less attention has been paid to the influence of social media on users' cultural expression and behavior. This gap in the literature points out to the opportunities for comprehensive analyses of how and in what manners micro-drama content constructs this ontology. The present paper aims at testing the effect of Shakeology micro-dramas on consumers cultural identity and their social behavior. In view of this, the paper aims to investigate how micro-drama content is associated with

cultural identity construction and social interaction. This study combines qualitative content analysis with a case study on micro-drama interactions on Dou Yin. The findings contribute to understanding how digital platforms help shape culture while complicating the understanding of the function of media in creating and disseminating culture.

2. Literature review

The advent of social media has not only facilitated cultural integration but also altered the preferences of network users. The emergence of new social media platforms is a continuous phenomenon; for instance, the popularity of short videos, which originated in 2014, has grown exponentially in recent years[2]. The rapidity and brevity of short videos enable them to capitalize on the fragmentation of time among users, appealing to their desire for immediate gratification. Adapted to the qualities of mobile broadcasting, they facilitate the sharing of user-generated content at any time and in any location.

The advent of Dou Yin has precipitated a shift in social media usage, affecting both users and society at large. In selecting social media, users are not solely guided by personal preferences; rather, their decisions are shaped by the social environment in which they operate. In essence, the media and social software that individuals utilize are largely influenced by the norms and behaviors observed in their social groups. When these norms do not align with individual needs and preferences, they can produce counterproductive effects on each member, subsequently influencing their behavior. Once a network platform has accumulated sufficient influence within its internal system and external social environment, it will reach a critical mass of perception. Both Dou Yin and TikTok are products of the same company and represent short video platforms. However, they are not identical. Dou Yin and TikTok target different markets, with TikTok aimed at overseas audiences, including those in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, while Dou Yin primarily focuses on China. The existence of different target demographics necessitates the customization of content on each platform in order to achieve greater resonance with specific users. The distinction in audience size and composition gives rise to a divergence in video content, resulting in a distinctive cultural expression [3]. At this juncture, the number of users on the platform is expected to increase exponentially, significantly enhancing its attractiveness [4].

In both the digital domain and traditional electronic media, the psychological effects of media consumption often manifest as immersion, participation, and a sense of presence. Dou Yin's utilization of short-form video, or micro-drama, is an effective method of capturing and maintaining user attention. The year 2021 witnessed accelerated development for micro-dramas, with their low production costs, high viewership, dramatic plot twists, and the ability for users to consume an episode in a relatively short timeframe making them particularly appealing.

In the contemporary information age, brief video content has become a highly sought-after form of media. This is because most users are accustomed to accessing information and engaging with content in short, fragmented bursts. These include moments before bed, during the toilet break, and after work. This preference for shorter forms of content is becoming increasingly evident when compared to traditional forms of media, such as a 40-minute or one-hour TV series, which can be consumed in a single episode. The ability to watch an episode in a matter of minutes is also a significant factor influencing the growing popularity of micro-dramas. Additionally, the frequent introduction of plot twists, approximately every 30 seconds, provides users with a heightened sense of excitement and engagement. This sensation of "brainless" bliss is a quality that traditional television series are unable to evoke. In comparison to a comprehensive television drama comprising 40 or 50 episodes, the entire micro-drama can be consumed in a mere 10 minutes.

As this phenomenon develops, there is a gradual shift in the form of cultural communication, moving away from the traditional serious model and towards a more entertaining one. This

transformation is evident not only in the manner of content presentation but also in how contemporary individuals engage with and consume culture.

Initially, culture was perceived as a serious entity. However, it has since become integrated into the domain of entertainment, thereby facilitating its transmission to subsequent generations[5]. The advent of television some decades ago saw the introduction of cultural politics and religious education into the realm of entertainment. The subsequent rise of short videos has extended this trend to encompass everyone's daily entertainment, fragmentation of time, reduced public comprehension, and the portability of mobile phones. This transformation has effectively dismantled the final barrier to human cultural advancement. This has resulted in a superficial approach to culture, and since that time, entertainment has become pervasive, rendering the reading ability of the younger generation incomparable to that of their grandparents. Furthermore, the prevalence of brief video content has contributed to the intensification of the commercialization of popular culture.

The advent of short videos and micro-dramas has precipitated a profound transformation in how culture is disseminated. This novel content format facilitates the more expedient and streamlined dissemination of information, aligning with the contemporary tendency to utilize time in a discontinuous manner. Against this backdrop, the increasing prevalence of cultural entertainment and commercialization has become increasingly evident, reaching the status of a social phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has also given rise to the debate surrounding the potential dilution and shallowness of cultural values.

3. Case study

The Dou Yin platform is home to a highly popular short drama entitled 'Hi, Mom'. The narrative follows the experiences of Si Nian, a contemporary female college student who finds herself transported back to the 1980s. There, she encounters Zhou Yueshen, a divorced pig farm proprietor with two children, as she prepares to wed[6]. Additionally, she engages in intellectual combat with his relatives while simultaneously expanding her business operations.

The drama enjoyed considerable popularity during the Spring Festival of 2024. Its appeal primarily stemmed from the visual presentation of its two protagonists, resonating with a significant proportion of the audience. The visual attractiveness of the characters greatly contributed to the drama's overall success. Secondly, as a concise, swift, and invigorating micro-drama, it allows users to engage with the plot without excessive cognitive effort, providing a sense of gratification. The female protagonist does not indulge others in the plot. In the event of encountering words that elicit an unfavorable emotional response, she does not internalize these negative sentiments but rather articulates her own perspectives directly. This reversal engenders a sense of elation among many users, who find themselves unable to resist its appeal during periods of fatigue.

3.1. Narrative Style and Cultural Symbols

In terms of narrative style, the Dou Yin short film employs the "6-second rule," which stipulates that the initial six seconds of the footage must capture users' attention, otherwise they will immediately move on to the next content item. In the context of cultural media consumption, two distinct forms of enjoyment can be identified: enjoyment and interest. Firstly, it has been observed that viewers tend to prefer entertainment that incorporates cultural references with which they are already familiar, as this allows them to easily comprehend the basic symbols, whether verbal or non-verbal behaviors, or recognize the media personalities, such as actors or singers, involved. Secondly, viewers find entertainment that presents is culturally different interesting if they perceive unfamiliar symbols, characters or storylines as cognitively challenging but ultimately understandable [7]. The perspective can be applied to the domain of short-form video, or micro-dramas. In such contexts, it can be

observed that users will initially focus on the appearance of the protagonist, which is also the primary point of interest in the short drama "Hi, Mom."

This is due to the fact that the male protagonist bears a striking resemblance to the actors Xiao Zhan and Huo Jianhua, while the female protagonist is visually similar to the South Korean actress Choi Seul-li. From a visual perspective, the appearances of the male and female protagonists significantly contribute to the drama's popularity, particularly in establishing recognizable characters. Secondly, in terms of interest, the entire drama employs a fast-paced plot in order to attract the public. In a matter of seconds, the relatives are still attempting to discredit the heroine, only for the heroine to provide counter-evidence in the next moment. The plot progresses in a dynamic manner, with unexpected twists and turns occurring within a relatively short time frame. This engaging narrative style leaves the audience feeling a sense of excitement and anticipation.

3.2. User Interaction and Community Building

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory posits that once an organism's basic physiological needs are fulfilled, individuals experience a state of dissatisfaction, prompting them to pursue higher-order psychological needs [8]. The fundamental premise of this theory is that individuals will persist in pursuing novel objectives for fulfilment, including social needs. In this context, the use of a smartphone to satisfy entertainment needs not only fosters interpersonal relationships but can also be regarded as a means of addressing psychological and social needs[1]. The proliferation of short video apps has led to a notable increase in users' reliance on the platform for social interaction, facilitating the expansion of their social networks and the formation of new friendships[9].

Furthermore, the distinctive technical capabilities and functionalities of these applications facilitate convenient browsing and uploading of a diverse array of engaging videos, thereby fostering a functional dependence on their usage. One illustrative example is the success of the short film "Hi, Mom." The popularity of the film has attracted a significant audience and become a prominent topic of discussion within users' social circles. Concurrently, the film "Hi, Mom" has gained a foothold in the lower-tier market through a low-price strategy, thereby increasing the number of users willing to pay to view the short film. The fee of 1 yuan per episode is relatively inexpensive for the majority of users, thereby encouraging many individuals to pay for access. Furthermore, when a user makes a payment, they frequently disseminate their account details to acquaintances, thereby contravening conventional social conventions. As a result of this social aspect, users tend to exhibit a heightened sense of dependence on the platform, which is a significant factor contributing to the popularity of short video apps.

4. Conclusion

The perceived functional value and the willingness to construct bridging social capital encourage the utilisation of brief video formats. This aligns with previous research findings indicating that the technological characteristics of social media facilitate the formation of new interpersonal relationships among users[10]. Moreover, the correlation between perceived functional value and connectedness to social capital is more pronounced among users who possess a heightened sense of Internet self-efficacy.

This phenomenon demonstrates that short video platforms not only satisfy users' desire for entertainment, but also offer novel avenues for users to forge and sustain social connections. In this process, short video platforms facilitate the formation of "weak connection" relationships through their distinctive interactive mechanisms, while also providing users with greater autonomy to express themselves and construct personal identities. In comparison to conventional social structures, short video platforms are characterised by a greater degree of inclusivity and openness, affording users the

opportunity to disseminate aspects of their daily lives and articulate their sentiments through the medium of short videos, thereby facilitating the formation of novel social connections. The reduction in social complexity and the establishment of a more egalitarian social dynamic are among the key factors that have contributed to the growth of social functionality on short video platforms[4].

The distinctive narrative style of “Hi, Mom” effectively captures users’ attention, while the content serves as a significant source of user engagement. Furthermore, it has permitted users to create their own social networks on the social short video platform Dou Yin, thereby becoming a new conduit for social media usage. The utilisation of brief video sequences enables the formation of “weak ties,” characterised as equal relationships rather than the hierarchical structures that previously defined interactions. The establishment of this model has resulted in users experiencing greater levels of happiness and comfort in forming their own social groups, while simultaneously reducing the barriers to users displaying their self and social identity in online communication.

In conclusion, short video platforms attract a significant number of users through their engaging content and innovative technical features. Additionally, they facilitate the formation of novel social connections, thereby transforming traditional social patterns. Furthermore these platforms reduce barriers to social interaction and facilitate the dissemination of culture and the accumulation of social capital, becoming an integral conduit for contemporary social media. The prevalent use of short videos has facilitated user participation in social interactions on more egalitarian terms, while also promoting the further integration of culture, entertainment, and social interaction in the digital age.

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