

Analysis of Douyin's Communication Mechanism: A Perspective from Communication Studies

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Abstract:

Douyin, a short-video app, has become ubiquitous. People watch it for fun, but it's more than just entertainment—it's a big part of how we get information. This paper looks at how Douyin spreads content and why it works so well using communication theories. We'll examine aspects such as information dissemination velocity, Douyin's algorithmic engagement mechanisms, and the dual role of users as both consumers and content creators. Based on communication theory, it can be concluded that Douyin's algorithm-driven personalization and interactive features have successfully transformed user engagement from passive consumption to active participation, fundamentally reshaping media consumption patterns in China through its application of communication theories like Agenda-Setting and Uses and Gratifications. The platform's ability to simultaneously fulfill entertainment, social connection, and information needs has established it as a powerful cultural influencer that shapes both individual behavior and public discourse while raising important questions about psychological impacts and global variations in its effects.

Keywords: Douyin, Communication Theory, Communication Mechanism, Short Video, Social Influence

1. Introduction

Recently, short video apps like Douyin have really blown up in China. Douyin, which is basically the Chinese version of TikTok, isn't just about fun videos—it's become a place where people share news, talk about trends, and even discuss serious topics. What makes Douyin so engaging is its algorithm, which precisely identifies user preferences and continuously delivers similar content. That's why it's so hard to stop scrolling once you start [1]. The algo-

rithm keeps recommending content based on your interests, so users just end up spending hours on the app [2]. Another reason Douyin works so well is that it's super interactive. Users don't just watch videos; they like, comment, share, and even create their own content. This aligns well with the "uses and gratifications theory," which states that people use media to fulfill their needs, whether for entertainment or to connect with others[3]. TikTok gives users a sense of control over the content they watch, which makes it more engaging than traditional television or media.

This study will explore how TikTok's algorithm works and how it connects to communication theories such as agenda setting theory[4]. It will also explore how TikTok has changed the way Chinese people consume and interact with media.

2. Douyin's Communication Features

Douyin (also known as TikTok internationally) has emerged as a dominant platform in China. One of the main reasons for its success is its innovative communication system, which heavily relies on its algorithm and the active participation of users. It represents a platform centered on entertainment and social interaction, providing multiple channels for user engagement with content. Douyin's ability to personalize the experience for each user is a major factor behind its massive popularity.

2.1 The Role of Algorithms in Douyin's Content

A key feature of Douyin's communication system is its algorithm, which customizes the content users see. Upon initial app usage, users may experience information overload due to the volume of available content. However, after interacting with videos for a few minutes, Douyin starts to understand your preferences. It tracks your actions—like which videos you watch, which ones you skip, what you like, and what you share. Then, the algorithm uses this data to show you more content you're likely to enjoy.

This personalization is what keeps users hooked. If you watch videos related to cooking, for example, the app will start showing you more cooking content. The algorithm identifies successful content patterns and ensures sustained user engagement. It's this continuous cycle of showing content that fits your interests that makes Douyin so addictive. Research indicates that this algorithm-driven system enhances content virality by effectively matching videos with target audiences [5]. The endless scrolling and personalized recommendations keep users engaged for hours without even realizing it.

2.2 How Users Interact with Douyin

Douyin's success stems not merely from its content offerings but from the ways users engage with it. The app has features like liking, commenting, sharing, and even creating content, such as duets and remixes. These interactive elements transform users from passive content consumers to active participants.

The platform facilitates social interaction through mechanisms such as liking, commenting, and video sharing. This creates a "social loop" where users are not just consuming content but actively spreading it. For instance, when users share humorous videos with peers or create their own interpretations of trending challenges, they contribute to the

viral dissemination of content. This sense of participation keeps users engaged and invested in the app. Douyin is not just about watching videos—it's about contributing to the creation and sharing of content[6].

3. Theories Behind Douyin's Communication Style

To understand why Douyin works so well and why it influences communication, we can use two important media theories: Agenda-Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. These theories help explain why users spend so much time on Douyin and how it impacts public conversations and behaviors.

3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory and Douyin

The Agenda-Setting Theory posits that media not only reflects reality but actively shapes public perception by determining which issues receive attention. In the case of Douyin, the app's algorithm essentially decides what topics are important by promoting certain content. When a video or hashtag goes viral on Douyin, it often becomes a major topic of conversation, not only on the platform but also in real life.

For example, when a dance challenge or meme becomes popular, it spreads beyond Douyin and gets picked up by news outlets and social media. Douyin doesn't just reflect what's trending—it actively pushes certain content to shape public discussions. In this way, Douyin plays a crucial role in setting the agenda for social conversations[7].

3.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory and Douyin's User Engagement

The Uses and Gratifications Theory posits that individuals utilize media to fulfill specific needs, including entertainment, social connection, and information acquisition.. Douyin does a great job of meeting all of these needs. The platform provides short, entertaining videos that offer quick bursts of amusement. But Douyin also has a strong social component, where users can interact with others through likes, comments, and shares, satisfying the need for social connection.

Furthermore, Douyin serves as a significant information source. Users often turn to the app to stay updated on current events, cultural trends, or viral news. The app's algorithm customizes the feed, delivering content that aligns with the user's interests, which makes the platform even more engaging. This ability to fulfill various needs is why Douyin is so engaging and why people spend hours on it [8].

4. Douyin's Influence on User Behavior and Society

Douyin's impact extends beyond individual user behavior

to encompass broader societal trends and cultural values. Through an analysis of Douyin's effects on individual and societal habits, this study examines the platform's influence on digital communication patterns.

4.1 Douyin's Effect on User Behavior

One of the most pronounced effects of Douyin is its capacity to foster addictive usage patterns. The platform continuously delivers personalized content aligned with user preferences, resulting in extended engagement periods. This mechanism reinforces repetitive checking behaviors, creating challenges for disengagement. This is an example of behavioral psychology, where reinforcement leads to habit formation [9].

4.2 Douyin's Societal Impact

Douyin's influence extends beyond individual behavior—it's also playing a major role in shaping societal trends and values. The platform promotes new cultural phenomena, social behaviors, and even social movements. For example, viral dance challenges and lip-syncing videos have become part of mainstream culture. As a cultural influencer, Douyin not only shapes these trends but also plays a pivotal role in constructing cultural identities . [9]

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper examines Douyin's operational mechanisms and its widespread popularity. It mainly focuses on the role of its algorithm, the way users interact with content, and how social features like comments, likes, and shares keep people engaged. By using theories like Agenda-Setting Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, it's clear that Douyin's personalized content recommendations play a big role in keeping users interested. The platform not only delivers content aligned with user preferences but also promotes interactive behaviors and content sharing, thereby enhancing the social dimension of the user experience. This analysis illustrates Douyin's dual impact on individual behavior and public discourse, thereby accelerating the propagation of trends and ideas. However, there are a few things that could be improved. For one, the paper didn't dive into how using Douyin for a long time might affect people psychologically. Future research could investigate whether excessive Douyin usage correlates with addiction risks or mental health impacts, particularly among adolescent users. Also, this paper mostly focuses on users in China. It would be useful to compare how Douyin is used in different countries to get a fuller picture of its global impact. Finally, although this study acknowledges Douyin's role in trend formation,

it does not adequately address its potential influence on political discourse and social movements, representing a valuable avenue for future research. Overall, Douyin is an amazing tool for both entertainment and communication, but there's still a lot to learn about its influence on society. Future research should investigate Douyin's transformative effects on individual values, political discourse, and self-perception.

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