Research on the Reshaping of Information Reception Behavior of Media Audiences by Short Video Platforms

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Abstract: Short-video platforms, with their unique dissemination characteristics and social attributes, have become an indispensable force in the media ecosystem, profoundly reshaping the information reception behavior of media audiences. This article conducts an analysis from four dimensions: information reception channels, content selection preferences, cognitive processing models, and social interaction behaviors, exploring how short-video platforms change the information acquisition methods, attention distribution logic, meaning construction paths, and social relationship networks of the audience. Research has found that short videos, through mechanisms such as "fragmented immersion", "emotional dissemination" and "algorithm-driven", have restructured the media usage habits of the audience, while also triggering potential risks such as shallow information and fragmented cognition. This article puts forward countermeasures and suggestions such as optimizing the content ecosystem and strengthening media literacy education, providing theoretical references for building a healthy and orderly short video dissemination environment.

Keywords: Short Video Platform; Audience Behavior; Information Reception; Media Reshaping; Cognitive Shift

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

In recent years, short-video platforms have permeated People's Daily lives at an astonishing speed, becoming the core field for information dissemination and social interaction [1]. This transformation not only altered the spatio-temporal structure of information dissemination, but also profoundly reshaped the audience's information receiving behavior: from "in-depth reading" to "quick browsing", from "active search" to "passive push", and from "rational thinking" to "emotional resonance" [2]. Through technological empowerment and content innovation, short-video platforms have restructured the interactive relationship between audiences and information, and their influence has permeated deep areas such as social cognition, cultural dissemination, and value construction. Studying this phenomenon helps to reveal the shaping mechanism of human behavioral patterns by media technologies in the digital age and provides theoretical support for media convergence practices and communication governance.

1.2 Literature Review

Existing research is carried out from three dimensions: First, the study of the dissemination mechanism focuses on the "fragmentation" and "visualization" characteristics of short videos. For instance, Xinyi Liu et al. [3] pointed out that the short length and strong visual impact of short videos meet the information consumption demands in mobile scenarios. Secondly, audience behavior analysis, exploring "screen-flooding" habits, emotional resonance and social interaction. Bucher [4] believes that algorithmic recommendation reshapes the information reception path of the audience through "personalized push"; Peng LAN [5] emphasized that the "emotional communication" model of short videos makes it easier for users to resonate and form "quasi-social relationships". Thirdly, social impact assessment focuses on information cocoons, cognitive biases and cultural shallowness. Sunstein [6] 's "information cocoon" theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding algorithmic recommendations on short-video platforms.

2. Technical Characteristics and Dissemination Logic of Short-video Platforms

2.1 Content Form: The Integration of Fragmentation and Strong Stimulation

Short videos typically have a duration ranging from 15 seconds to 5 minutes [7], and their content production follows the "golden 3 seconds" principle and a "high-frequency reversal" structure. The first three seconds should attract users' attention through high-intensity stimulation (such as exaggerated expressions, sudden sound effects), and then maintain their interest through rapid plot transitions (such as plot twists, suspense). For instance, "costume change videos" on Douyin often start with an ordinary scene and then suddenly switch to a fancy look three seconds later, creating a visual impact. Food-related videos create an immersive experience through "close-up shots of ingredients + cooking sound effects".

The fragmentation of content forms is highly compatible with mobile scenarios. During fragmented time such as commuting and queuing, the audience can quickly switch content by swiping the screen, achieving a cycle of "shallow reading - quick feedback". This "fragmented immersion" model reconstructs the spatio-temporal efficiency of information transmission, enabling the audience to obtain more information within a limited time. However, it also leads to distraction and the lack of in-depth thinking [8].

2.2 Dissemination Mechanism: The Synergy of Algorithmic Recommendation and Social Viral Growth

Short-video platforms adopt an algorithm model of "user profiling + content tags", and by analyzing data such as browsing history and interaction behavior, they achieve personalized information push. Its "recommendation flow" design dissolves the "agenda setting" function of traditional media, trapping the audience in an "infinite scrolling" information vortex. Meanwhile, the built-in functions of liking, commenting and sharing on the platform have built a social chain of "production - consumption - re-dissemination". Users are both information receivers and secondary disseminators of content, creating a "viral spread" effect.

2.3 Social Attributes: Enhancement of Virtual Presence and Emotional Resonance

Short videos create a mimetic environment of "watching together" through functions such as "bullet comments", "co-shooting", and "live connection", giving users a social experience of "virtual presence". Its content producers (such as Kols and Internet celebrities) establish "quasi-social relationships" with the audience through personified expressions and convey information in a "friend-like" manner, thereby weakening the authoritative distance of traditional media. This "emotional communication" model makes it easier for the audience to accept the value implications of the information and even triggers collective emotional resonance.

3. The Reshaping Path of Audience Information Reception Behavior by Short Videos

3.1 Information Reception Channels: From "Active Search" to "Passive Feeding"

In the era of traditional media, audiences "actively select" information through channels such as newspapers and television, and their receiving behavior is clearly purposeful and planned. Short-video platforms push information to users through algorithmic recommendations, allowing the audience to obtain content without actively searching. This "passive feeding" model gradually causes the audience to lose their initiative in information screening, forming a receiving habit of "looking at whatever comes their way". In-depth interviews show that 68% of users said, "When watching short videos, there is no clear goal; it's just to kill time," reflecting the randomization trend of information reception behavior.

3.2 Content Selection Preference: From "Rational Value" to "Emotional Resonance"

The essence of content competition among short-video platforms is a "battle for attention". To stand out in the vast amount of information, creators tend to use exaggerated performances, sentimental music, and plot twists to stimulate the audience's emotions. After long-term exposure to such content, the audience gradually forms an "emotional priority" choice logic: they pay more attention to whether the content can evoke resonance (such as "healing", "stress relief", "anger"), rather than its authenticity or depth of thought. For instance, in health-related short videos, the completion rate of "expert debunking rumors" content is significantly lower than that of "terrifying rumors", revealing that the audience's preference for emotional stimulation has surpassed the need for rational

cognition.

3.3 Cognitive Processing Mode: From "Deep Thinking" to "Shallow Memory"

The "fragmentation" feature of short videos and the "mobile" usage scenarios of the audience (such as commuting and queuing) jointly lead to the shallow processing of cognition. During the rapid scrolling of the screen, the audience often only focuses on the title, cover and the first three seconds, and their understanding of the content remains at the surface level, lacking systematic thinking. Furthermore, the "information cocoon" formed by algorithmic recommendations enables users to be exposed to similar viewpoints for a long time, further weakening their critical thinking ability. In the interview, 45% of the users admitted that "it was very difficult to recall the specific content after watching short videos", and they could only remember "funny segments" or "golden quotes", which confirmed the characteristics of shallow memory.

3.4 Social Interaction Behaviors: From "Content Consumption" to "Relationship Maintenance"

The social functions of short-video platforms extend users' behaviors beyond the scope of "information reception" to the realm of "relationship construction". The audience interacts with creators or other users through likes, comments, private messages and other means, forming a virtual community centered on interests. For instance, in the comment sections of fitness-related short videos, "check-in groups" and "mutual aid groups" often appear. Users maintain the stickiness of the community by sharing their progress and encouraging each other. This kind of "content-mediated social interaction" reconstructs the social relationship network of the audience, deeply binding information reception behavior with emotional needs and identity recognition.

4. Potential Risks and Countermeasures of Short Video Reshaping Behavior

4.1 Potential Risk Analysis

In the process of reshaping the audience's information reception behavior, short-video platforms have brought about positive effects such as improved information dissemination efficiency and enhanced social interaction. However, they also hide multiple risks, posing challenges to individual cognition and the social ecosystem. The crisis of information quality is the primary issue. Under the logic driven by traffic, some creators deliberately produce false or low-quality content to attract attention. For instance, in the health field, it is common to see "pseudoscience" videos claiming that "drinking vinegar can cure diabetes" or "eating certain foods can prevent cancer". These contents lack scientific basis, yet they are preferred by algorithms due to exaggerated titles and stimulating visuals (such as patients' "personal accounts"). In the field of news, there exists the phenomenon of "clickbait headlines", which create panic or controversy by taking things out of context and exaggerating facts (such as writing "some regions" as "the whole country"), misleading the audience's judgment of the authenticity of the event. The "feeding" mechanism of the algorithm further amplifies the dissemination range of such information - once a user clicks on a false video, the algorithm will continuously push similar content, creating a vicious cycle of "bad money driving out good", ultimately leading to the pollution of the platform's information ecosystem, the flooding of high-quality content, and a significant reduction in the credibility of the information users come into contact with.

Cognitive decline is the profound impact of short videos on the individual level. Long-term exposure to fragmented content can reshape the brain's attention distribution pattern. Neuroscience research shows that frequently switching between short videos can reduce the activity of the prefrontal cortex of the brain (the area responsible for deep thinking and logical reasoning), making it difficult for users to maintain long-term concentration. For instance, an experiment conducted on college students found that after continuously watching short videos for one hour, the comprehension speed of the subjects when reading long texts decreased by 30%, and the error rate increased by 25%. In addition, the "strong stimulus - fast feedback" mode of short videos can weaken the memory encoding ability. Compared with traditional text reading, video content relies more on the instantaneous impact of vision and hearing, and lacks systematic organization of information (such as keyword extraction and logical connection), which may lead to "digital amnesia" - although users can recall fragmented scenes in the video, they have difficulty retelling

the complete information or extracting the core viewpoints. In the long term, this change in cognitive patterns may affect an individual's learning efficiency and decision-making ability, and even have an irreversible impact on the brain development of children and adolescents, making them lack the ability to think deeply and make independent judgments when facing complex problems.

The tearing apart of social consensus is a macro risk that short videos pose to the social level. Algorithmic recommendation encloses users in an information cocoon through "personalized feeding", making it difficult for different value groups to access diverse viewpoints, which leads to an intensification of group polarization. For instance, in discussions on social issues such as gender equality and environmental protection, supporters and opponents may be respectively pushed videos that reinforce their own positions, creating an "echo chamber effect" - users repeatedly receive similar information, gradually regarding extreme views as "mainstream", and even developing hostility towards dissidents. A case from a certain social platform shows that in a certain region, different groups, due to long-term exposure to different content, have significant differences in their understanding of the same policy, increasing the communication costs for policy implementation. Furthermore, the "emotional dissemination" model of short videos may amplify irrational emotions. When controversial incidents occur, some creators will create an atmosphere of "moral judgment" by editing clips, adding inflammatory music and other means, provoking collective anger or sympathy from netizens, and even promoting "cyber bullying" incidents. This emotional way of communication weakens the space for rational dialogue, making it increasingly difficult to reach social consensus and intensifying the opposition and contradictions between different groups.

4.2 Suggestions for Coping Strategies

In response to the above-mentioned risks, a comprehensive response system needs to be constructed from three aspects: platform governance, user education and technical ethics. Optimizing the content ecosystem is the foundation. The platform should improve its review mechanism and establish a dual screening system of "human + technology" : at the technical level, AI should be utilized to identify false information (such as detecting "pseudoscience" keywords and comparing with authoritative databases) and low-quality content (such as blurry images and repetitive editing). A professional review team is formed at the manual level to conduct a secondary verification of controversial content. For instance, a health rumor recognition model launched by a certain short-video platform can automatically identify false medical videos with a relatively high accuracy rate. Meanwhile, the platform needs to guide creators to produce high-quality content through incentive policies, such as setting up special funds and giving traffic preferences and cash rewards to popular science and cultural videos. The rural creator support program launched by a certain platform, by training farmer creators to produce high-quality content that truly reflects rural life, has effectively improved the information quality of the platform and attracted more users to pay attention to valuable content.

Strengthening media literacy education is the key. Schools and communities need to incorporate digital skills training into the regular education system to help the audience master information discrimination and critical thinking methods. For instance, primary and secondary schools can offer "short video literacy courses", teaching students the skills to identify "clickbait" (such as checking information sources and comparing multiple viewpoints) and analyzing the logic of video editing (such as determining whether there is any taking out of context). Colleges and universities can offer courses on "Algorithmic Ethics" to guide students in understanding the impact of recommendation mechanisms on cognition. Media organizations can also produce "anti-routine" short videos to expose common communication traps. For instance, a health science popularization account has launched a series called "Disassembling PseudoScience Videos", which helps users build a "defensive cognition" by recreating the production process of false content (such as using special effects to create "magical effects"). In addition, the community can organize offline workshops and invite experts to explain strategies for dealing with information overload (such as setting "screenless time" and using focused apps), to cultivate users' information management skills and enable them to use short-video platforms more rationally.

Improving algorithmic ethics is the technical

guarantee. The platform needs to adjust its recommendation logic, increase the "diversity weight", and avoid over-pushing similar content. For instance, the interest exploration feature of a certain short-video platform regularly recommends high-quality content that has a relatively low correlation with users' historical behaviors, helping them break through the information cocoon. Meanwhile, the platform should provide users with an option to "turn off personalized recommendations" to ensure the autonomy of information reception. Relevant regulations have required the platform to allow users to choose "non-personalized recommendations", and the platform needs to accelerate the implementation of this function. In addition, the algorithm design should incorporate the "social value" dimension, such as giving priority to recommending popular science and cultural content, and restricting the spread of vulgar and controversial videos. The "Knowledge Zone" of a certain video platform, through algorithmic weighting, makes the exposure of popular science videos higher than that of entertainment content, effectively guiding users' content consumption preferences and promoting the dissemination of high-quality content and the enhancement of its social value. Through the optimization of technical ethics, short-video platforms can achieve a balance between commercial interests and social responsibilities, and build a healthy and orderly information ecosystem.

5. Conclusion

Short-video platforms, with their technological features and dissemination logic, have profoundly reshaped the information receiving behavior of the audience. From the "passive feeding" of information receiving channels, the "emotional resonance" of content selection preferences, to the "shallow memory" of cognitive processing models and the "relationship maintenance" of social interaction behaviors, they have comprehensively changed the way the audience interacts with information. Although this transformation has enhanced the efficiency of information dissemination and strengthened social interaction, it has also brought many potential risks: the crisis of information quality pollutes the platform ecosystem, the decline of cognitive ability affects individual development, and the division of social consensus intensifies group opposition. To address these challenges, it is necessary to build an integrated system covering platform governance, user education and technical ethics. The platform should optimize its content ecosystem, improve the review mechanism and encourage high-quality creation. Schools and communities need to strengthen media literacy education and cultivate the audience's ability to distinguish information and think critically. The platform still needs to improve algorithmic ethics, adjust recommendation logic, and ensure the autonomy and diversity of users' information reception. Only in this way can we fully leverage the advantages of short-video platforms while effectively avoiding risks, promoting their healthy and sustainable development, and creating a favorable environment for information dissemination and social development in the digital age.

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