

# Douyin: Competes for Users' Leisure Time

Xuhua Jiao

Shandong University of Technology, Zibo 250000, China

xidou@sdut.edu.cn

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## Abstract

Nowadays people especially the younger generation wants more light-hearted stuff instead of serious writing. Social media cater to that and have already become part of daily life for many Internet users in China. Douyin ranks very high for social media users in China. More and more ordinary persons use Douyin app to spend their leisure time. Government agencies and organizations use it as an alternative to market and propagandize their goods and services. In order to amuse netizens as well as propagandize they pay attention to persuasion arts and use the slangs and emoji the netizens likes.

## Keywords

Short-Video App, Douyin, Video Sharing, Music App.

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## 1. Surge of Mobile Social Media

The rapid development of the Internet and new media has remarkably changed people's lifestyles. The number of global Internet users has exceeded 3 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 42%. Today some Chinese social media innovations are even leading the global trend of social media development. The landscape of Chinese social media is continuously undergoing fast-paced changes. We are in a new dynamic era of digital engagement and social media play an important role in this context.

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on technological foundations of Web 2.0. Compared to the traditional media, the new media's common feature is that they allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. At present, handheld devices play an important role in the daily life. For majority of Internet users, mobile devices become the first choice to get online in China. Consequently mobile phone apps grow dramatically. Mobile social media have become the most popular and convenient social tools marketing means. According to the 42th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, by June 2018, the number of Chinese netizens reached 802 million, mobile Internet users reached 788million, and the percentage of Internet surfing via mobile was as high as 98.3% [1]. Chinese prefer mobile devices for surfing the Internet for entertainment and online purchases owing to its convenience.

## 2. Popularity of Douyin

Among all mobile social media, Douyin has become the most widely and frequently used one in China. Developed by Beijing ByteDance Technology, Douyin becomes popular with the country's younger generation. Once users use this music short video app, they will be hooked and can't stop using it. The users upload 15-second clips that show people doing various activities such as dancing, singing or applying makeup, which is funny and fashionable and attractive to young people. Young person tends to spend their leisure time watching music videos on the app after work as a means of relaxing and relieving stress of work and life.

Most users of Douyin app are born in a peaceful period and grew up in the digital age. They enjoy the online activities of surfing, searching, and shopping. This new social media technology's main

market is cities, especially first-and-second-tier cities at first. Then they observe that personal computers and mobile phones are no longer luxuries for rural residents and they can easily access the internet at home. So the firm find the new market and change its development strategy and has already reached rural areas and expand further into rural markets in the future. The digital generation is and will continue to be an important consumption force. Douyin can be used as a marketing tool owing to its popularity among young digital generations.

As a music short video app, Douyin caters to youngsters' taste and hurried lifestyle. So it attracts dramatic users since its launch in late 2016. By June 12th, 2018, Douyin has attracted 166 million active users, with the majority aged below 30, announced by Beijing ByteDance Technology [2]. Douyin users spend an average of 12.6 hours on a monthly basis. Douyin has been on top of the downloading chart at the China iOS Store for months. Short video accounted for 7.4% of the total time Chinese people spent online in May [3]. As an innovative mobile application, Douyin is installed on over 90% of smartphones and integrated into most young person's routines. It transforms users' daily life in many ways. As part of a new lifestyle, Douyin spearheads a new era of mobile Internet communication.

### 3. Secret of Douyin's Surge

Video sharing is a growing category of time spent online by Chinese users. Researches show that vivid posts with videos and pictures are more popular on social media, and can attract more followers. With the development of visual medium, the age of "graph-reading" is coming. As short video music app, Douyin provides videos that cater to users' reading habit. Any users whether professional or amateur, can make clips attracting eyeballs. This is just the secret of success of Douyin.

The era of picture reading is based on modern science and industrial technology. Douyin provides easy-to-use interactive platform, which requires minimum IT skills. Douyin provides a fool-type operation, its content production mechanism is quite simple for users, they don't need to grasp any special advanced technology and know how it works. What they should do is just to use it. Users can make, edit and broadcast short video clips to their favorite songs. At the same time, the app uses an algorithm to promote clips in individually tailored feeds. Douyin uses artificial intelligence-based software to analyze online trends and edit related clips. Any users can use this app at low or even no cost for information disclosure, acquisition and diffusion. In a word, the success of the Douyin comes from its content production mechanism and recommendation mechanism.

The trick to success is the role and function of Douyin, that's kind of means of social intercourse. Modern netizens tend to share information with others, express opinions on things and want to get others response rapidly or rather, instantly. As a participative, interactive, open, and transparent music app, Douyin has enabled new ways of information transmission, interpersonal communication, and social participation. This newly emerged social media application appeals to modern netizens who are eager to exchange information and ideas with others. Douyin develops dramatically and is among the largest social media platforms in China. It is completely open to everyone. Users can edit, publish and comment on videos that are publicly readable by everyone. According to use and gratification theory, users use this app to meet all kinds of needs, most important, to amuse themselves, spend the leisure time, release pressure and relax.

Celebrities and Web stars is important to the development of Douyin app. Normally they have a tremendous amount of fans and followers. Celebrities include singers, movie stars, writers, and sports stars and are well known to the public. Most celebrities are opinion leaders. They have a huge influence on any topic of their choosing. Although they upload limited content, almost every clip may be reposted and commented by their fans. Web stars are usually controversial characters and contribute greatly to virtual community's hot topics and are key source of the traffic to the app.

#### **4. Censorship and Regulatory Pressure**

Cyberspace presents challenges that are different from any we've faced before, and it raises new questions, most important of them is how to achieve both security and openness in cyberspace. To achieve this aim, it's necessary to regulate and censor the internet within the reasonable scope. The laws of libel, privacy, and copyright still apply in cyberspace.

Chinese social media is dominated by entertainment news, gossip, commercial information; stars and sports. There were major concerns with the quality of information on Douyin, especially with regards to content. There are not adequate protections for underage children since violence and eroticism in the app is not appropriate for them. ByteDance and Douyin app face regulatory challenges owing to the quality of the content. Some of Douyin's clips are drawing scrutiny for inappropriate and potentially dangerous content. Regulatory pressure is mounting owing to the reports that some users were seriously injured by imitating Douyin videos. People's Daily calls for stricter management and censorship of the app. Ministry of Culture and Tourism has launched several formal investigations against the firm for publishing inappropriate clips as well as improper comments. Popular joke-sharing app Neihan Duanzi launched by the company is ordered to shut down permanently In April, 2018 for promoting vulgar and improper content.

The firm starts to practice self-censorship in order to survive and provide better service. It is possible that with Douyin's filter system, the potentially offensive and improper clips will be prohibited from publishing in the first place.

#### **5. As a Means of Marketing and Propaganda**

In the age of new media the audiences become more active and no longer passive receivers. They welcome interactive communication instead of one-way persuasion. Social media applications have two broad organizational functions: information and dialog. So they become prevalent for marketing and propaganda in the age of interactive communication. As one of new media, Douyin is specially used to aim at those young generations. Any individual, group, or organization can use Douyin at low or even no cost for information disclosure, stakeholder engagement, and organization promotion. It is interesting to note that, despite the ready-to-use interactive features of Douyin, most organizations tend to use it as a one-way information dissemination channel rather than engaging in two-way communication with the general public.

The social media is so popular that even the government and public authorities have discovered its power and are using social media to adapt policy and direct propaganda efforts based on online public opinion, as well as to popularize mainstream culture and values and positive information to the public and to engage with audience. On the one hand, the government and authority make a strategic choice to use social media such as Douyin app as a replacement for traditional websites; on the other hand, it seems that they don't make full use of the interactive functions of social media. Rather, they try to take full advantage of social media's fast and convenient broadcasting function to make them heard as well as accepted by audiences. Douyin id of the government and authority is different from the ordinary id after all; their contents are more formal and serious. Yet, while the content of these short video is usually serious, the tone of the videos should be very casual, full of popular web slang and emoji taking into consideration of what users likes and dislikes. It should be noted that even in the informational videos, the use of slang and emoji prevalent.

In a word, Chinese government agencies and organizations are using social media to share information, build community, and mobilize resources, and that they use a large amount of slang and emoji to fit into the virtual community.

#### **6. Alternative to spread traditional culture**

Studies show that traditional culture can be popularized via the Internet and new media. With an increasing use of Douyin, it grows to be a means of popularizing the traditional culture by ordinary

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netizen whether consciously or unconsciously and whether purposefully or not. It's hard to instill culture. The traditional culture contributed by netizen themselves and disseminated via social media is more easily welcomed and accepted by netizens.

The materials chosen and transmitted by netizens can reach zillions of people judging from the perspective of users themselves. Furthermore, social media platforms emphasize a more users-oriented experience and enable the sharing of information. Most importantly, a variety of traditional culture information has been and no doubt will be continuously generated and transmitted among tremendous numbers of users via Douyin, providing Douyin with enormous potential to affect the diffusion of culture among ordinary people.

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