The Impacts on the Strategies of Gourmet Video We-media Due to the Outbreak of COVID-19: Taking Bilibili as an Example

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Abstract

Based on the principle of combination of theory and practice, this paper starts with two hypotheses, and studies the changes of target strategies of gourmet we-media, represented by the 10 most influential gourmet we-media in Bilibili. Some relevant calculations and questionnaire results are taken as research samples for data analysis and content analysis, and the following conclusions are drawn: firstly, due to the COVID-19, the content of gourmet we-media has been adjusted in different degrees, and the proportion of homemade food teaching videos has increased. Videos related to the social problems caused by the COVID-19 have gained more attention. Secondly, during the pandemic, the time for audiences to watch the food video increased. At the same time, the audience has a variety of expectations for the contents of food we-media. Thirdly, the strategy change of we-media is effective, which is not only conducive to improving their popularity, discussion and actual income, but also can meet the five needs of audience's personal use of media, especially to reduce anxiety. The research result has timeliness, innovation and exploration in the field of media. It is helpful to guide the gourmet we-media to adjust the target strategy in response to public emergencies in time, so as to achieve sustained and good development, with high reference and inspiration value for the gourmet we-media industry.

Keywords

We-media, Gourmet video, Bilibili website, COVID-19.

1. Introduction

There has been a saying in China since ancient times that "food is the most important thing for the people". Gourmet is a symbol of Chinese culture, playing an indispensable role in life. Since January 23rd, 2020, China announced the lockdown of Wuhan due to the COVID-19. It is also recommended that people in other areas reduce their travel. In the period when people are forced to stay at home, the cooking methods of all kinds of food, especially the food costing long time, are trending topic on the website, such as some we-media platform such as Bilibili. This website ranks first among the most popular websites of young users and gathers Generation Z in China by virtue of its unique culture of bullet screen, community creation and animation. The results of academic researches on Bilibili are mainly divided into three aspects: first, taking the website itself as the research object, mainly analyzing the characteristics and functions of the bullet curtain, the operation mode of Bilibili, and the subculture phenomenon derived from the website. The second is to analyze the audience's psychology, behavior and aesthetic taste. The third is to discuss the communication strategy and effect of mainstream culture on Bilibili platform. There are only two articles on live streaming of eating on Bilibili. Shi's research (2019) shows that eating live streaming will lead to the alienation of aesthetic and consumption[1]. Xu and Pan (2019) build an impact relationship model, and deduce that the

formation of program features and fixed forms, and the adherence to high-quality content have a positive impact on the increase of fans amount and audience stickiness[2]. And people also shared homemade food on Wechat Moments and other social platforms. Therefore, we believe that in a special period, the promotion of people's attention to food is inseparable from the gourmet videos produced by the we-media. Bilibili provides a place for various we-media to upload their videos. According to Bowman and Willis (2003), we-media is a way for the general public to share their own experiences and news after connecting with the global knowledge system through digital technology[3]. This way of free participation in comments as an individual civilian quickly spread from the field of news to other fields of information manufacturing. In China, the main forms are personal websites, Weibo, video uploaders and WeChat official accounts.

With the popularity of mobile Internet technology, vedio we-media has been booming. The 45th statistical report on the development of China's Internet (2020) shows that China has 904 million Internet users and 897 million mobile Internet users. The number of users of online video (including short video) in China has reached 850 million, of which 773 million are short video users, accounting for 85.6% of the total Internet users[4]. Driven by the huge market, video we-media in China has been growing rapidly since 2014.

Chinese scholars have a deep research on the predicament and strategies, problems and solutions of the we-media industry. We-media has difficulty in sustainable development: first, it cannot guarantee the continuity of content. Second, there is no effective way to turn their achievements into profits. Li (2018) did an analysis from the perspective of development communication. As a result of the non-professional communication subject can become the creation subject of we-media video, they may distort facts, consume hot spots, plagiarize content and other chaos, which has a negative impact on social development[5]. Therefore, scholars have put forward suggestions on the standardization and institutionalization of we-media. In this research, we mainly focus on gourmet we-media. So far, there is no clear definition of "gourmet we-media" in academic field. By summing up the current development status of gourmet we-media, this paper points out that "gourmet we-media" refers to the subject of communication with gourmet as the main production content by virtue of network platform (including various social networking sites, apps, etc.). There are two main types: tasting and teaching. This study is based on these two types.

As for the research of gourmet we-media, scholars' interest focuses on business marketing, communication characteristics, cultural connotation and aesthetic value. Luo's research (2018) demonstrates that the life style and consumption psychology of network users have changed by information digitization. If the gourmet we-media want to make great progress, they must pay attention to program creativity and make food the carrier of memory and emotion[6]. At present, the problem of homogeneity of video content is exposed in domestic food we-media. Chen (2020) believes that nowadays, it is no longer the investigation of users' preferences for the production of content, but the unique personality of the communication subject is the scarce resource, and trend is undoubtedly the closer integration of content and subject [7].

Based on the researches done by previous scholars, it is found that the academic research on gourmet we-media often focuses on a certain we-media account, or studies the development of the whole industry from a macro perspective. These studies are conducted in a relatively stable social environment. There is still a vacancy in the comparative study of gourmet we-media groups on a specific platform in a special period. In early 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 affected the user scale and usage time of the network video application. The innovation of this paper is to explore the impact of public health emergencies on gourmet we-media content and the role of these videos on the audience in the context of the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, according to the background and the information we have gathered, we propose two hypotheses. The first one is that to response COVID-19, gourmet we-media adopted new targeting strategies. Secondly, the change of strategy is beneficial to both gourmet we-media and audience. With uses and gratification theory, this research

analyzes the change of gourmet we-media's targeting strategies and the influence on themselves and audience.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data analysis

The first one is data analysis. We designed the questionnaire about the influence of gourmet videos to audiences during the epidemic. when we observed research objects, we calculated relevant data such as update frequency, average duration ect. We designed questionnaire and distributed them to the people of all age groups and different backgrounds. This method is a standard method which is utilized broadly in fact-based research. Finally 327 pieces are collected. The results served as the reference for the analysis of impacts.

2.2 Content analysis

The second method is content analysis. In this research, we choose 10 high-quality content uploaders officially certified by Bilibili as the research object. There are two purposes. One is to explore how these gourmet we-media adjust the target strategy during public health emergencies, and the other is whether the audience pays more attention to the psychological communication of gourmet we-media than the food itself. Through comparing the video contents before and after the outbreak of COVID-19, the new strategies for the sake of sustaining existing fans and attracting more audiences are concluded.

3. Results & Discussion

3.1 Statistics of Video Update Frequency, Average Duration and Shooting Scene of 10 Gourmet We-media Before and After the Outbreak of COVID-19

3.1.1 Calculation method description.

Table 1: Update Frequency, Average Duration and Shooting Scene

Name	Period	Update Frequency (days)	Average Duration (seconds)	Shooting Scene (%)
Xiang Xiang Battle	before	3.30	469.13	91.3
	after	2.62	525.10	100.0
Taro SAMA Love Cooking	before	25.30	268.67	100.0
	after	76.00	49.00	100.0
Bo Sang Eats All over the World	before	6.90	336.10	45.4
	after	8.40	327.00	88.9
Jing Han Qing	before	2.45	296.32	90.3
	after	3.45	319.32	90.9
Xu Da SAO	before	1.03	383.22	73.0
	after	1.24	484.43	96.7
Foodie Ming3	before	2.81	242.15	88.9
	after	4.00	319.37	94.7
Xian Bao Bao baby	before	3.04	417.08	88
	after	3.17	407.75	100.0
Yolk Pie Records Life	before	2.00	343.21	94.7
	after	1.95	376.18	97.4
The Story of Food in Dao Yue She	before	4.75	683.15	0.00
	after	2.71	647.29	75
A Lonely Gourmet	before	8.44	314.11	55.6
	after	12.67	327.00	66.7

Time period division: Take January 23, 2020, the day when Wuhan was put in lockdown as the time point. November 8, 2019 to January 22, 2020 as the Before Period. From January 23, 2020 to April 8, 2020 as the After Period, and the days of the two time periods are the same.

Update frequency: Divided by the total number of video releases in two time periods and the number of days.

Average duration: Add the total seconds of each video and divide by the number of videos.

Shooting scene: The number of indoor videos taken in two time periods divided by the total number of videos, and the result is expressed in percentage. The exterior includes restaurants, other cities, outdoor and other public places. The interior refers to private spaces such as home and studio.

3.1.2 Statistical results.

Among the 10 gourmet we-media, 3 were updated more frequently during the outbreak, and 7 were updated less frequently. The smallest decline was "Yolk pie records life", only 0.05 days. The biggest drop was Taro SAMA Love Cooking", and no video was released in 51 days. The update frequency of 5 we-media tends to stabilize. The average video duration increased in 6 we-media and decreased in 4 we-media. During the epidemic period, the indoor shooting percentage of 9 we-media increased, and The Story of Food in "Dao Yue She" increased most significantly, from 0% to 75%.

The above data shows that the epidemic has impacted the video production of gourmet we-media, and forced some people to change their shooting scenes.
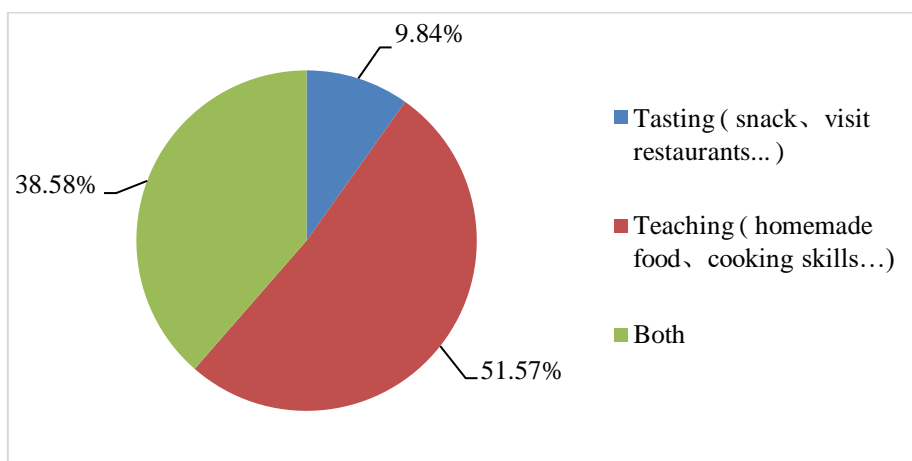
3.2 Audience Preference for Video Types

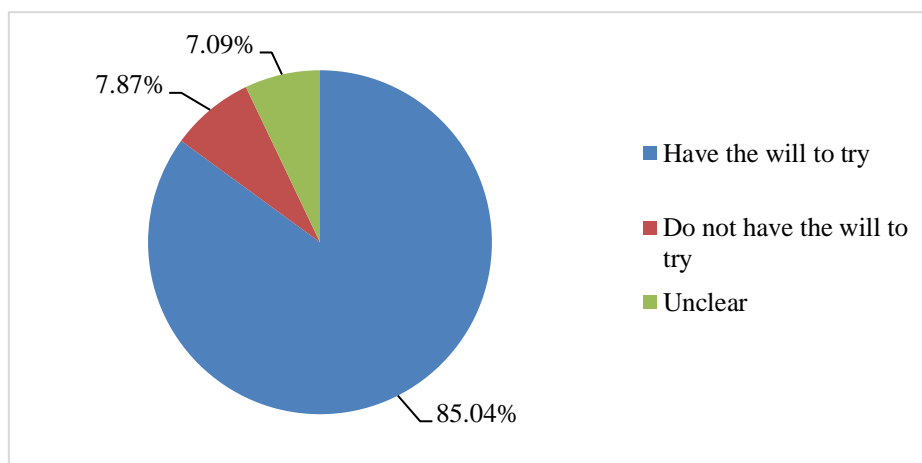Figure 1: Types of gourmet videos that audiences prefer

Figure 2: After watching the food teaching video, the percentage of people who generate the idea of cooking by themselves
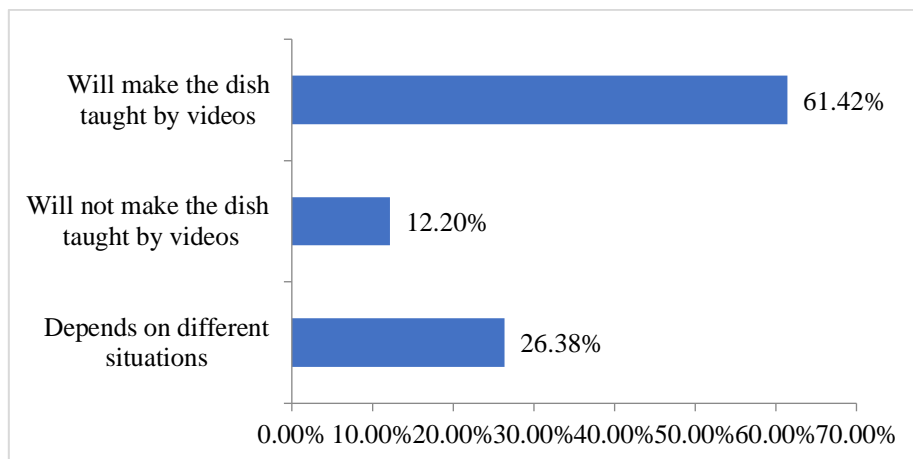
Figure 3: After watching gourmet teaching video, the percentage of people who operate by themselves

The result of figure 1 shows that only 9.84% of people prefer tasting videos rather than teaching, so more audiences actually have stronger willingness to learn cooking skills. According to figure 2 and figure 3, more than 85% of them would like to try the dishes taught by we-media, however, 38.58% of people just stay in the stage of having an idea and will not do the practical action. The reasons behind that are some objective reasons such as the lack of food ingredients and equipment. Some subjective reasons take up almost the same percentage of the objective ones which are the complexity of the dish taught and the lack of motivation to drive them take the try.

3.3 Six Targeting Strategies of Gourmet We-media

The first strategy is to imitate videos with great differences from food videos, which are very popular on other similar platforms. And the uploader records the whole process of their own experience. For example, "flying battle" imitated "Lingye" fancy sports videos, which not only brings freshness to the original fans, but also attracts those who doubt the authenticity of the video content of "Lingye" and strives to win their love and trust and turn them into new fans.

The second strategy is to shoot the content related to the epidemic, arouse the audience's discussion on social issues, highlight the individual's sense of social responsibility, and obtain the audience's respect and recognition on the moral level. Some videos also have specific social values. For example, "Bosang eat all over the world" records his experience as a volunteer in the hospital, and exposes manufacturers of unqualified masks to the police. The video playback volume has exceeded 7.6 million, reaching a new high. "Xiang Xiang battle" uses a microscope to observe how many bacteria are in the masks used for a day, reminding people to change them regularly. The "Yolk Pie Records Life" takes the challenge of self-discipline for 24 hours to express the concept of healthy work and rest during the epidemic.

The third is to set some conditional rewards for the audience to meet the interactive needs of the audience. For example, when the number of likes reaches a certain value, some uploaders will make the content with high popularity or exaggerated entertainment content required by the audience in order to interact with the audience and ensure their popularity continue to rise.

The fourth strategy is to produce teaching videos about "copying the signature dishes in restaurants at home, which makes up for the regret that people can't go out for cuisine". In this way, the enthusiasm of the audience is aroused and the anxiety of the audience about the epidemic situation is relieved. At the same time, it can increase a wider audience, such as the audience of the restaurant itself, who will be interested after seeing the video, so as to increase the attention of we-media.

The fifth is to reach a win-win situation through cooperation and competition. Gourmet we-media on the same platform are in a competitive relationship. But during the epidemic, some uploaders

appeared in other people's videos or mentioned other uploaders in their own videos to improve the topic vibe and click rates. The number of win-win videos among we-media has increased significantly.

The sixth is that the gourmet we-media will shift the video topic to the field of personal life. This strategy can not only increase the self exposure of the we-media and make the audience feel cordial, but also draw people's attention to relaxed and beautiful things and alleviate people's inner anxiety during the epidemic. For instance, "Xiangxiang battle" recorded vlogs of her daughter's birth, and more videos about jigsaw puzzles were produced by "Xian Bao Bao baby" .

3.4 Significant Effect of Gourmet We-media for Strategy Changes
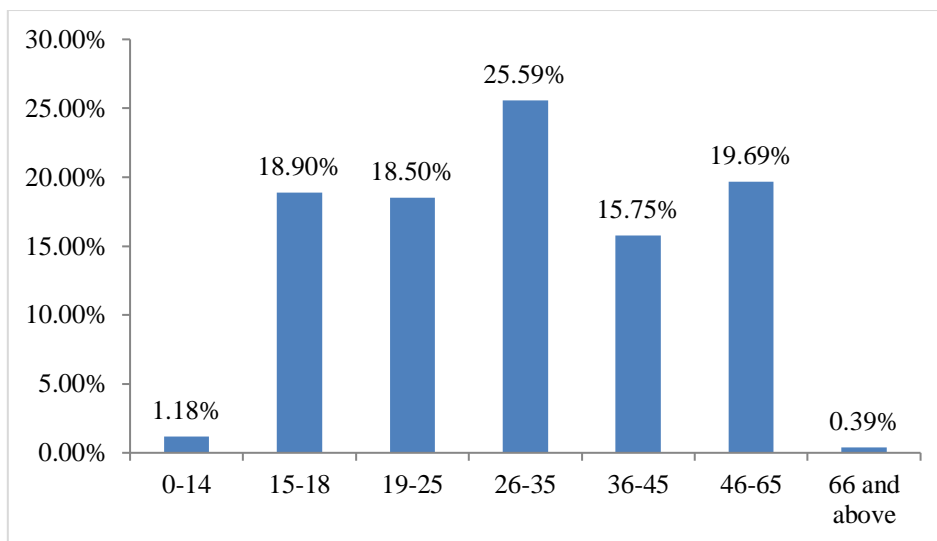
3.4.1 Increase the potential audience group

Figure 4: Age group of people who watched gourmet videos during the outbreak of COVID-19

From figure 4, it can be seen that people spend more time on food videos compared to the time before the COVID-19. The audience watching these gourmet videos spread evenly, and the targeting age group has shifted from 15-30 to 30-45. This reveals that these food videos have attracted more middle-aged people in addition to its original audience, which are mainly teens.
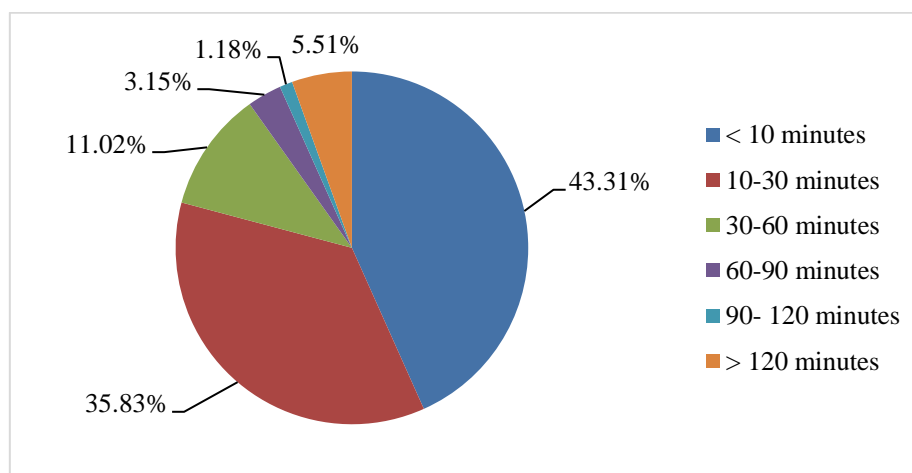
3.4.2 Increase the heat of discussion.

Figure 5: Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the distribution of time that audiences spent on watching gourmet video
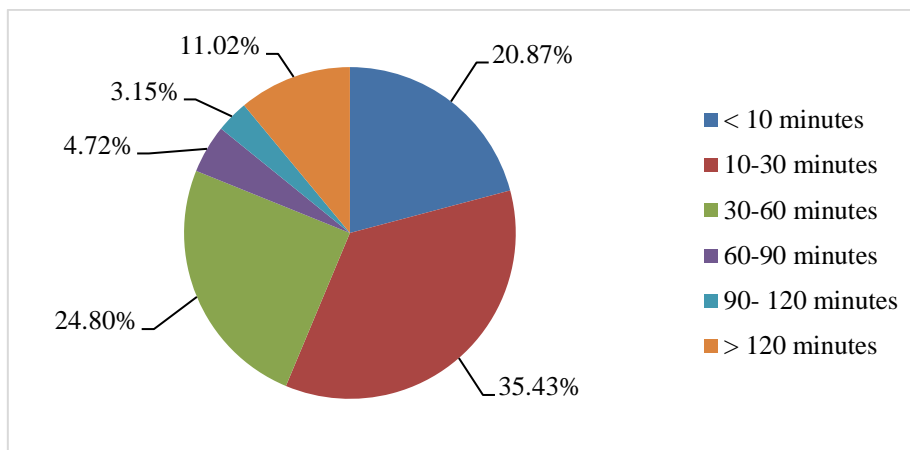
Figure 6: During the outbreak of COVID-19, the distribution of time that the audiences spent on watching gourmet video

From table 2, we calculate the number of likes these food videos received and compare it with the time before COVID-19. It can be concluded that the number of comments has increased overall. On media such as Bilibili, these three aspects can be used to measure the influence and attractiveness of this media to the audience during this special time. The number of likes the video receives represents the audience attitude and the number of comments shows if the audience are willing to interact with these media. When all these three numbers grow, it means that after these food videos have made adjustments due to this special context, not only the number of audience attracted to these kinds of videos increases, but they also tend to like these videos much more than they were before. Meanwhile, comparing figure 5 and figure 6, we find that the average time people spend on these food videos has increased dramatically, from 20.86% of the audience who spend more than 30 minutes on these videos to double number of audience during the COVID-19. Therefore, this database effectively proves that the popularity of these kind of media has increased during this special time.

3.4.3 Increase the income

Table 2: Average Likes, Average Comments and Live On-Screen Comments

Name	Period	Average Likes (thousand)	Average Comments (pieces)	Average Bullet Screens (pieces)
Xiang Xiang Battle	before	155.52	4945	18947
	after	181.28	7021	24144
Taro SAMA Love Cooking	before	114.67	3261	6332
	after	110.00	7715	2654
Bo Sang Eats All over the World	before	49.00	1150	4157
	after	178.00	3799	12244
Jing Han Qing	before	256.23	6877	20123
	after	352.77	12083	41352
Xu Da SAO	before	62.47	1988	11775
	after	121.07	3859	23598
Foodie Ming3	before	13.91	1261	1062
	after	18.00	1253	1976
Xian Bao Bao baby	before	105.36	1813	11487
	after	190.458	4875	29975
Yolk Pie Records Life	before	116.84	2423	12457
	after	210.05	5090	32021
The Story of Food in Dao Yue She	before	66.85	2588	9254
	after	120.59	3137	17038
A Lonely Gourmet	before	139.56	2321	13022
	after	143.17	5245	13163

Based on the overt "Bilibili's Encouragement Plan", the website will distribute money to those we-media based on their discussion, which can be calculated according to the broadcast volume, likes, comments and the number of bullet screens. The website makes these quantities directly proportional to the actual payment for we-media. This is not only a way that those we-media can gain production budget, but also the income for themselves, which is tightly related to each we-media. This plan can encourage them to make more elaborate videos, generate a higher passion and attract more audiences. During the outbreak of Coronavirus, those quantities for food we-media have increased dramatically by regulating their strategies toward their contents. Therefore, the real benefit they can gain from it will have a year-on-year growth and realize a virtuous circle eventually.

3.5 Significant Effects toward Audiences for Strategy Changes of Gourmet we-media

In content analysis, we found that gourmet we-media added the type of videos regarding their personal life during this specific social environment. The major content of those content was based on relaxing life itself, then added some attractive elements such as funny memes and curative words. These sorts of videos are widely accepted and liked by audiences, which can be directly showed by the likes in Graph 7. Furthermore, doing data analysis, we find that the majority of the audiences believe that such videos can relieve the mental pressure caused by the epidemic and some respondents express their willingness to see more displays of their life attitudes. Thus, these kinds of videos exert positive psychological effects on audiences.
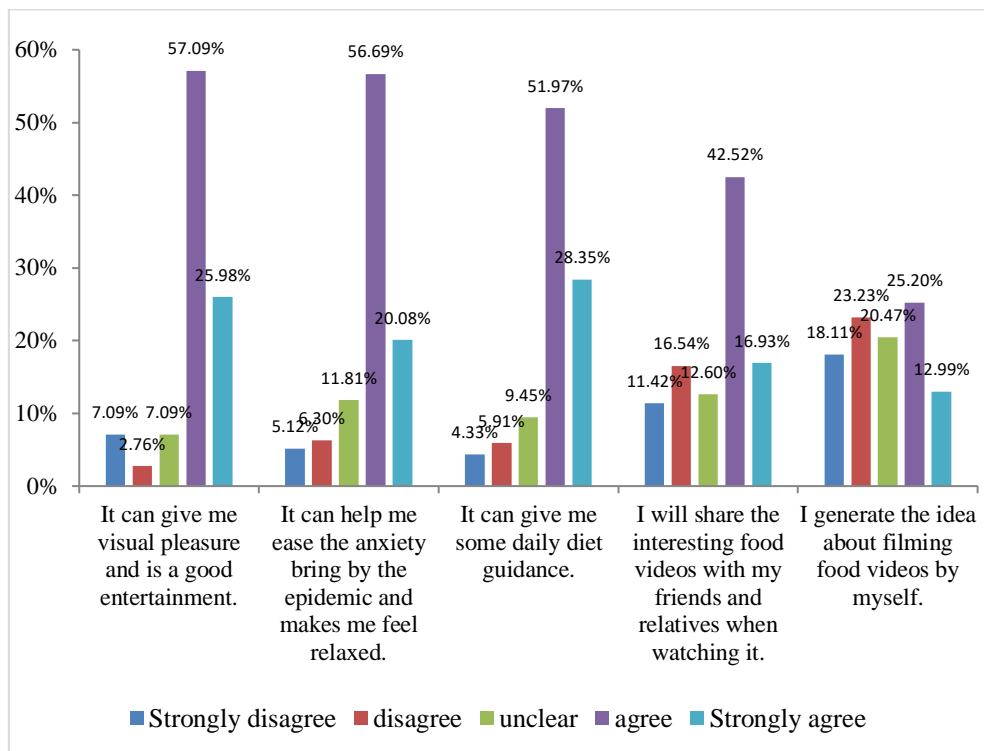

Figure 7: Audience's feeling after watching food videos

3.5.1 Gourmet we-media can satisfy five basic needs for audience, especially to relieve people's anxiety

Cognitive needs: 80.32% of audiences assert that they can acquire knowledge and message from food videos and enhance their understand toward cooking skills. Meanwhile, food we-media can provide them daily diet guidance.

Affective needs: 57% of audiences claim that they feel satisfied after watching food videos. 83.07% of them feel the visual beauty brought by food videos and consider them as entertainment.

Personal integrative needs: Some viewers organize key information from the video into text and post it in the comment section to enhance the dissemination of information and consolidate their importance in virtual community.

Social integrative needs: In the comment section of the videos, some audiences use their personal experience and knowledge to help others solve questions, promoting the social contact and gaining others' approval. In addition, the questionnaire shows that when watching video they like, 59.45% of audiences will take the initiative to share with others, which strengthens social bonds to some degree.

Tension release needs: 76.77% of audiences believe that food videos help them distract and release the anxiety produced by the virus, making them feel released.

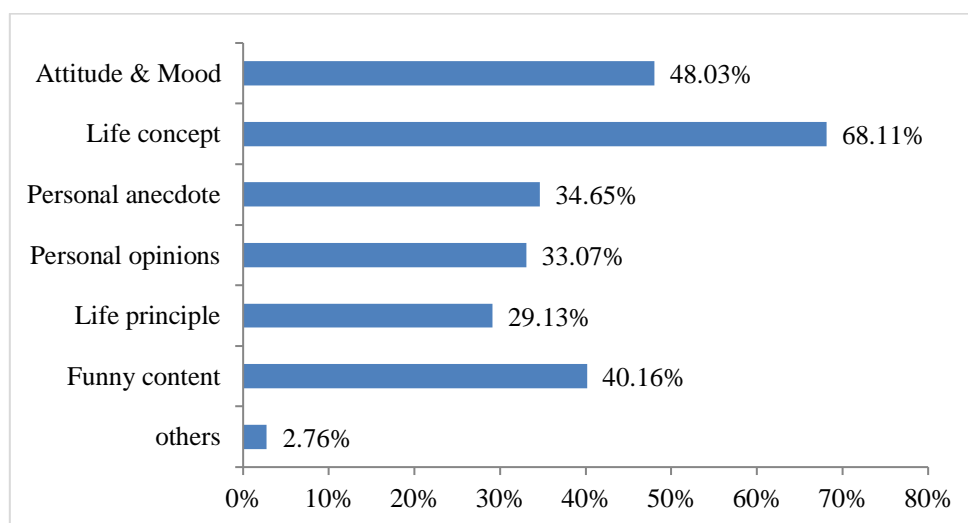### 3.5.2 Audiences have higher expectations toward food videos

Figure 8: Other contents that audiences would like to see in food we-media's videos

Combining the responses to Figure 8, audiences are more like to see life concept (68.11%), attitude and mood (48.03%) and humorous memes (40.16%). Meanwhile, almost one third of audiences will to watch personal anecdote, personal point of view and life principle. It illustrates that most audiences value culture and connotation except food. Some audiences propose that they will lay emphasis to shooting and the level of editing. Based on the model of expectancy-value, we can infer that people watch food videos because they would like to satisfy their needs and consider it valuable. Then they will measure the level of satisfaction to decide whether they will watch it again. If gourmet we-media can always meet the expectations from audiences, the audience will establish a habitual mode of we-media usage. As a result, the combination of personal style and audiences' expectations in making videos is the basis for the sustainable development of food we-media.

3.6 Reflection and Suggestion

Although food videos can provide audiences with daily diet guidance, some gourmet we-media film the contents which are out of reality and not environmental friendly. For example, some of them cook with food ingredients requiring dozens of times more than the normal preparation, buy expensive and various kinds of take-out food at one time, display the behavior of overeating and even use their language to modify these behaviors into a fresh and interesting experience under the epidemic. A portion of food we-media add sexual or other insinuative content into their topic for a long time for commercial benefits; a single instance is that one we-media even use the topic of the coronavirus to attract others but actually for advertising one online game. In such a special period, as a public figure in cyber space, these kinds of inappropriate behaviors are easy to be imitated by the audience,

resulting in the waste of social resources and possible seriously adverse effects. Therefore, it is necessary to establish corresponding restriction norms.

Regarding the strategy of production of videos, we have the following suggestions:

3.6.1 Pay attention to the mental interactions with audiences

With regard to videos' communication, the psychological interaction between communicators and audiences can be divided into two parts: cognitive interaction and emotional interaction. If the we-media want to achieve the expected communicational effect, they must pay attention to benign cognitive interaction with audiences and establish a profound emotional interaction based on the cognitive interaction. In we-media videos, the interaction with audiences can be reflected in the aspect of comments and bullet screen and some other aspects. Audiences can air their opinions. The cognitive interaction between them can be realized through the remarks. We-media can realize the cognitive needs or barriers of audiences by analyzing the content of the comments so as to adjust the direction of the video in time, which can in turn strengthen the empathy and the ability of interaction with audiences and thus achieve the purpose of maintain the existing fans. The suggestion for this kind of videos is to add the content such as "reading comments" and give their own responses toward these comments. This kind of videos can not only arouse the enthusiasm of the audiences to interact with we-media, but also increase their discussion invisibly. For audiences, this kind of behavior enable them to feel the connection between themselves and we-media, increasing the possibility for a continuous focus to food we-media.

The second one is emotional interactions. Serving as a symbol for Chinese traditional culture, food has always tightly bonded with some emotions since the ancient time. For instance, a Chinese traditional food "Jiaozi", reposes the sense of coziness in family reunion. Thus, strengthening the emotional connection with audiences can generate in audiences cordial feelings about food we-media, arouse   positive emotions in their deep heart. The basic advice for this type of interaction is to show their family life and engage other family members to participate in the video filming. More specifically, they can record the time that their children get birth, play with sisters and so on. These contents containing human nature can arouse the empathy from audiences and enhance their psychological belonging as well as a sense of personal identification.

3.6.2 Strengthen the social present behavior

Social presence theory refers to the degree to which a person is regarded as a "real person" and feels connected to others during the communication through media [8]. Some studies believe that social present theory can describe people's perception toward others with the help of media, promoting social interactions among people in virtual environments and enhancing the sense of belonging, thus reduce loneliness[9]. The suggestion for this kind of videos is that they can study with a we-media "Xu Da SAO". He updates his videos at the same time every day, which makes the audiences develop a habit of eating with watching his food videos. Some viewers also claim   in the comment section that their own food even become more appetizing by watching his videos. Therefore, some social-present sense for food we-media can be greatly improved by obtaining their real-time company. In addition, one food we-media "Xian Bao Bao Baby" regularly updates his jigsaw videos which related to his personal interests besides gourmet contents. By showing viewers the results of jigsaw, he encourages people to insist their own interests, spreading positive ideas. This move not only encourages audiences, but also shows his three-dimensional personality through solving jigsaws. As a result, audiences can better get to know himself and strengthen the sense of social-present.

3.6.3 Diffusing other positive content reasonably

According to the results from the questionnaire, it is shown that the majority of respondents prefer seeing some contents other than only cates in food videos, such as diffusing life concepts. Watching the videos, viewers actually achieve the purpose of relaxing themselves. Therefore, adding other contents can help audiences adjust their mood and ease their pressure. Additionally, during the study, we find that when we-media add some humorous elements in their words and editing, their fan group have a higher interactivity and stability compared with other gourmet we-media of the same standard.

Thus, disseminating positive opinions in food videos and advocating healthy eating and living habits can stabilize the fan base and increase the number of positive comments and discussion from audiences toward food we-media. The representative of this kind of video is "The Story of Food in Dao Yue She". In the last shoot of each video, warm words will be added with a view to help people relieve their pressure after a day's busy work, enabling audiences to feel positive and encouraged and the bonds among them be enhanced.

4. Conclusion

The starting point of this study is the impact of changes in social environment caused by public emergencies on food videos closely related to people's lives. Therefore, it has timeliness, innovations and explorations in the field of media. The research object is the 10 most influential gourmet video uploaders in Bilibili, which is representative and typical of online platforms. Using data analysis and content analysis, this paper summarizes six strategies to cope with the epidemic: imitating other popular videos, shooting content related to COVID-19, setting up audience interaction rewards, teaching restaurant classic dishes, jointly shooting with other gourmet uploaders, and turning the video theme to personal life. Through the design, distribution, collection and analysis of the questionnaire, we find that although the shooting site was limited owing to the outbreak of COVID-19, resulting in some losses, but the benefits generated by the strategy adjustments were far more than this, and achieved a win-win situation for both we-media and the audience. It not only helps uploaders to increase the potential audience of we-media, the heat of discussion and the actual income, but also helps the audience to alleviate the anxiety and makes them have higher expectations for gourmet videos.

On this basis, the paper reflects on the content that violates the principle of environmental friendliness and sexual insinuation in the video and puts forward specific suggestions for the target strategy, which enable the gourmet we-media practitioners to realize that in the context of public emergencies, if they want to achieve healthy and sustainable development, they must make timely strategic adjustments and pay attention to the social benefits. The first suggestion is to take the cognitive and emotional interaction with the audience seriously and enhance the sense of identity and participation of the audience. Secondly, the audience's watching habits are cultivated by strengthening their own social behaviors. The third is to increase the content about healthy life, time management, peaceful mood and so on.

However, there are two deficiencies in this study. First, due to technical limitations and the lack of data monitoring the number of fans and the amount of playback, it is unable to accurately track the watching behavior of we-media fans and the specific changes in fan portraits. Second, the research object is all the we-media of food videos, without involving the research of graphic and audio. In terms of research content, it mainly focuses on target strategy, and lacks research on we-media economic operation and market survival from the macro level.

Even so, the research results can still provide high reference and inspiration value for the food we-media industry, especially in the food we-media image positioning and video style change. In the future, we will expand the research scope and use data monitoring methods to explore the norms that reasonably restrict the personal behavior of we-media and the extensive impact of food we-media on society from a more macro perspective.

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