

Media and Communication: Research on Communication, Dependence and Influence in Short Video

– Taking Dou Yin APP as an Example

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Abstract: In this era, traditional paper media is gradually replaced by online media such as streaming media, online app and video media, and the ways of information dissemination are becoming more and more diversified. Fifteen years ago, the first thing people said when discussing the news every day was: “Which newspaper did you read?” Just 10 years ago, the first thing people said when discussing the news every day was: “Have you tweeted yet?” Five years ago, Dou-Yin was introduced. From offline to online and from paper to end media, the media in China and around the world have undergone this change in the dissemination of news and information. And this paper focuses on one APP: Dou-Yin, to study the dissemination, user reliance and what aspects of its short videos affect the audience.

Keywords: Dou-Yin, communication study, audience impact studies, mass communication

1. Introduction

The innovation of mass media and its communication mode drastically changed and updated during these decades. In mainland China, the shift from traditional papered media to algorithm-based new media only occurred in 6 years: In 2005, the general populace gained news only depending on the papered news carriers like the newspaper, leaflets, magazines, handbooks and so on; however, the change happened near the start of Beijing Olympic Game 2008, at that time, the general populace did not obtain latest news merely from traditional papered media carriers, but also obtained latest news by the digital media carriers, like the television, Tencent News, Sina News, Sohu News and various internet forum: Tian-Ya Forum, Tie-Xue Community, Chui-Zi Wang, HuPu Platform and so on. The vivid growth of series of internet and online media tremendously enriched people’s daily life and ways to get news. Finally, the revolutionary event of the transformation of Chinese media’s history was the occurrence of the Sina-weibo. In 2011, a “Quick Blog” product named “Sina-weibo” (also called “Xinlang Wei Bo”) was developed by the Sina Company. This product defeated the traditional internet blog and simultaneously made the traditional papered media out. Since that time, many Chinese media audiences have obtained daily news from the Sina-weibo APP or Sina-weibo Online, instead of reading newspapers.

Hence, from 2005 to 2011, only six years passed, and the face of media communication in mainland China essentially evolved. Following 6 years, from 2011 to 2017, it changed and also evolved in high velocity. The year 2017 can be regarded as a remarkable year of Chinese media's history: The marvelous short-video product: Dou-Yin, officially came into the world and walked into people's daily life. It was designed and developed by the Byte-Dance Company. 2017 was regarded by many people in mainland China as "Dou-Yin Yuan Nian" (The Birth Year of Dou-Yin).

At first, Dou-Yin, as an APP which mainly for short daily video making, was merely applied by people to share their daily life and many people just regarded it as a vivid short-video maker, because Dou-Yin could support users to add some vivid background musics and funny emoji into their videos, this could make a normal video become attractive and extravagant, so Dou-Yin was the king of people's daily entertainment and amusement. However, the development of Dou-Yin APP, it allowed users to share long videos which are over 60 seconds and many official accounts also garrisoned into the Dou-Yin APP, so Dou-Yin also owned the news communication function.

Nowadays, many people use Dou-Yin not only to enjoy and share videos, but also to obtain news. Dou-Yin has become people's tool for obtaining news and social events, it plays a role like the newspapers in the past times and various internet news platforms in the past years.

However, despite Dou-Yin can provide people the instant news, it is failed to guarantee the reality and professional attitude during the communication of the news. Many news sharers in Dou-Yin frequently add their personal opinion to the news, which they share can be regarded as the biggest problem. The second problem is, that Dou-Yin's news sharers often share slide news instead of the whole event, so this may mislead many audiences.

Compared with mainland China, in Hong Kong, many people are still gaining news from the newspapers ----- the traditional papered media. This phenomenon confused many people in mainland China: the media is also well-developed in Hong Kong, and the people in Hong Kong also have the opportunity to use various online news apps like SingTao Daily, Online Da-Kung-Pao APP and so on. Also, they have Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Tik Tok ----- the oversea style Dou-Yin, so they can also read news by them like us; to explore the reasons why people in Hong Kong stick to traditional paper media.

The confusion of many people in mainland China has also become one of the research targets of this article. Hence, in this article, the author will focus on the comparisons between mainland China and Hong Kong: the communication ways, the influences of communication and the dependence on communication. Also, the author will focus on how the audiences of the Dou-Yin APP can identify false information and resist false news.

The research approach of this paper is mainly qualitative, by reading a large amount of academic literature and extracting key information from it, to explore and analyze and justify the topic studied in this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1. HK vs Mainland: The Difference Between Communicating Way

According to [1], the main communicating way of news and information in Hong Kong is still mainly depending on the paper media. For instance, during 2016-2018, the Apple Daily published 799,285 newspapers and at least 91% of them were succeed in selling. However, the online media of Apple Daily only increased 70,595 subscribers and about 30% of them finally canceled their subscription. The online performance worked weaker than offline newspaper performance. The Da Kung Pao also experienced similar situation: 293,909 newspapers were succeeded in selling during 2016-2018 but Da Kung Pao's online media received a lower subscription rate. The non-local and Singapore-originated Sing Tao Daily was succeed in selling 535,982 newspapers and about 9,940 magazines

during 2016-2018 in Hong Kong, but their online news APP: Sing Tao APP suffered from the confusion of low subscription rate and page views during a long time.

The case based on Apple Daily, Da Kung Pao and Sing Tao Daily shows the cordial reception of paper media in Hong Kong and the online media has been given a cold shoulder in Hong Kong. However, at the another side of the Shenzhen River, the situation is different: according to the research conducted by [2] on the media material use and media function cognition of urban audiences in Guangzhou and Shanghai, the so-called “media material” refers to the material that includes both traditional paper media and online new media platforms, which can promote information dissemination and media development. Media users (audiences) in mainland China, taking the two major cities of Guangzhou and Shanghai as examples, are divided by the age of 41. Audiences over 41 are more inclined to use traditional paper media to obtain information from newspapers and magazines. Audiences under the age of 41 prefer the use of online new media. For example, they prefer to read the online APP of Yangcheng Evening News, or pay attention to and subscribe the Dou Yin APP, Bilibili APP of Yangcheng Evening News, compared with buying a newspaper of Yangcheng Evening News.

Hence, the communicating way is totally different between Hong Kong and mainland China, substantially, mainland audiences have higher frequency in using online media to receive information, so the communicating way in mainland China is mainly basing on online APPs. In Hong Kong, the people depend on traditional paper media like newspaper and magazine more than online media, so the communicating way in Hong Kong is the publication of the newspaper.

Additionally, according to [3] and [4], these two factors caused this difference of the communicating way between Hong Kong and mainland China: the first factor is the audiences in Hong Kong believe that the newspaper and other kinds of paper media have the higher credibility and reality than online media. If people pursue the credibility of information, so the paper medias may become the first choice. However, the audiences in mainland China pay more attention on the instability and convenience than the credibility and reality when they collect and receive new information, so the online media becomes the winner, since online media has higher instability and convenience than the traditional paper media. The second factor is the online medias developed in a high speed in mainland China, but the paper media’s development is slow, decayed and even outdated, so this caused the disadvantage of paper media in communication. So, people in mainland China depend more on online media than paper media. However, in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong’s newspaper industry has a long history, and it also has a mature, stable, and institutionalized development. Until now, it still has many advantages that the online media temporarily does not have, so the online media is hard to replace the traditional paper media in Hong Kong.

2.2. HK vs Mainland: The Difference of the Influences of Communication

Different communicating way caused different communication influences. In mainland China, the term “Addiction in Dou Yin” is both and simultaneously pejorative and commendatory. On the one hand, it is a critic and dissatisfaction on the phenomenon, which shows many Chinese people especially young people addicted to watch the videos on the Dou Yin APP and forget their study, works and daily interpersonal activities, Dou Yin has already become the whole of their daily life. But on the other hand, this term is the appreciation of the high-speed development of Dou Yin APP, since Dou Yin APP is the most successful short video platform in mainland China.

Thus, the influence of Dou Yin APP and other kinds of online media like Bilibili and Kuai Shou can be regarded as a Janus Statue: it has a positive face and a negative face. The positive influence of online media communication is the information can be instantly disseminated and easily received by audiences. But its negative influences are it may causes online APP addiction especially among the teenager groups, and the credibility of the daily news which are communicated on the online media

platform cannot be well-guaranteed [5]. Much news on Dou Yin are fake news or twisted news, twisted news means that the news itself is real, but the reporting ways are full of the reporter's personal ideology and emotion.

Hence, audiences are hard to gain credible news on Dou Yin, gaining real news on Dou Yin requires Dou Yin's users have strong rationality and logical thinking to do the fact-check of news by himself or herself, this is hard for normal Dou Yin's Users. If teenager users addict to watching Dou Yin, so the probability and risk of fake news' brainwashing are ascending and increasing. This is the negative influence of Dou Yin and other kinds of online media.

Fragmentation information and homogeneous contents on online media like Dou Yin APP do harm to audiences' independent thinking. On the contrary, traditional paper media can help audiences to resist addiction and prevent tons of fragmented information and homogeneous contents, this is benefit for audiences to calm down, read the newspaper attentively, and think independently about the news [6].

2.3. HK vs Mainland: The Dependence of Communication

Firstly, it is necessary to provide a clear definition of the "dependence" of communication. In the context of this research, the "dependence" of communication means the audiences' dependence on the communication way and media style. It does not mean the communication depends on which way to conduct.

In mainland China, the audiences especially teenager audiences have strong level of dependence onto Dou Yin APP, according to [7], the audiences have strong level of dependence onto Dou Yin APP is basically mirrored by these three phenomena: first, many young people (18-25 years old) spend more than 4 hours on Dou Yin APP on average, they watch short videos of Dou Yin, play the games of Dou Yin and take short daily video as their Vlog by Dou Yin; second, not only young people, but also old people (60-90 years old) also spend more than 3 hours on Dou Yin every day; third, office workers also spend several hours per day for using Dou Yin, however, the aim of office workers to use Dou Yin is different from young people and old people, the young people and old people use Dou Yin and spending lots of time on it is mainly for personal entertainments, but office workers using Dou Yin is for their work: they propaganda their products and services via Dou Yin, Dou Yin is their business tool. Some practitioners of video editing companies even use Dou Yin for longer than 9 hours per day. In addition, a worrying phenomenon is that many children under 10 have begun to indulge in watching interesting short videos on Dou Yin APP.

All in all, despite the aims being different: young people and old people use Dou Yin for personal entertainment but office workers use it for business work, the phenomenon is common: people use Dou Yin for longer and longer, and rely more and more on Dou Yin.

Another noteworthy phenomenon is that the author had ever conducted oral interviews with 100-120 family members and friends, and asked them about where they learned about the news and information related to the war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, most interviewees said that they knew and learned about the Russo-Ukrainian War via Dou Yin, Bilibili, Kuai Shou and other online media platforms like We-chat and Weibo. Only 3 interviewees said that they knew and learned about the Russo-Ukrainian War by newspapers and only 1 interviewee said that he knew and learned about that from academic research.

This phenomenon shows two scary facts: first, with people's higher and higher dependence on Dou Yin APP, this APP and other kinds of online media platforms are not formal and professional news media, originally and naturally they are only some daily entertainment online APPs. However, now these online daily entertainment APPs have replaced the formal and professional news platforms and they are almost becoming the only way for people receiving daily news. The formal and professional news media was pushed away and placed in an awkward position. Second, since

information dissemination and news broadcasting are fragmented on Dou Yin, the audiences receive fragmented and twisted information from the videos of Dou Yin for a long time, one of the negative effects of this, is that it can lead them to misunderstand the news and information around them.

Additionally, since the news broadcast on Dou Yin is frequently with the personal ideology and prejudice of the broadcaster, so Dou Yin users can immerse in homogeneous information and opinion for a long time, and even impossible to hear some different opinions. This may lead information stratosphere or even exacerbate social opposition [8] (Chan, 2021).

Above is the situation of dependence of Dou Yin among the audiences in mainland China. On the contrary, in Hong Kong, the situation becomes more complex, the point is: on the one hand, Hong Kong online media users also counter the confusion of internet media addiction. According to the [9] Hong Kong Social Work Association (2021), there were close to 40,000 teenagers had a high level of internet media addiction, they addicted to Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, SnapChat and TikTok ----- a homogeneous short-video APP of Dou Yin. Hence, this point is similar to mainland China's online media users. On the other hand, the kinds of media that Hong Kong audiences can choose are more multiple and richer than audiences in mainland China, and Hong Kong audiences not only receive information from online media like Dou Yin/ TikTok, but also gain news from traditional paper media. So, as the old aphorism said: "Listen to both sides and you will be enlightened; heed only one side and you will be benighted.", because of the media audiences in Hong Kong can receive diversified information and opinions from different political ideologies media camp, so the media audiences in Hong Kong have lower level of possibility to fall into the information stratosphere and unilaterally trusting a certain information or concept.

3. Analysis

Based on this, the author believes that one of the reasons why Hong Kong audiences and mainland audiences in Guangzhou and Shanghai will choose different ways to obtain information is that Hong Kong audiences pay more attention to the source reliability of news. The Tik TOK APP, known as "Tiktok Hong Kong Edition", also has many owners and official accounts of the newspaper industry. However, Hong Kong audiences believe that it is biased to rely on this fragmentation and entertaining source to obtain information, The official online app of the newspaper industry is more trustworthy. Mainland audiences pay more attention to the convenience and immediacy of information acquisition: "Tiktok" and "Bi Li Bi Li" can make young audiences in large cities in the mainland capture information more quickly and even, so this method is more popular in the mainland, which is one of the reasons for the gradual decline of the mainland paper media.

In contrast, in the UK, according to [10] Alickson's (2019) research, British audiences under 36 years old will choose traditional paper and online media as their information sources. As for short video software similar to Tik Tok (an overseas version of Tiktok), online live broadcast platforms similar to "Panda Live" and "Fighting Fish Live" in mainland China are also often platforms for young people under 36 years old in the UK to learn the latest information. Young people in the UK are more accustomed to comparing the content reported by traditional paper media with the content disseminated online. They found that traditional paper media is more rigorous in describing financial, political, military, medical, and educational content than online media, and can better avoid frivolous and exaggerated negative expression techniques. Online media (hereinafter referred to as "end media") outperforms paper media in reporting sports, entertainment, and community real-time events. In summary, young people in the UK will first choose which type of information they want to obtain based on their own purposes when obtaining information, and then choose between end media or paper media. The author believes that the choices and usage of media by young people in the UK may be worth learning from among young people in East Asia.

4. Conclusion

Dou Yin APP, was originally designed for daily life fun and music sharing in 2017, users can make short videos which only 15 seconds, then add exaggerate “emoji” with some musics onto it, to decorate the video, finally submit it and share it among families and friends. People often used Dou Yin to produce daily video logs to record their daily life, and also enjoyed other users’ videos. This is the origin usage of Dou Yin APP. However, in 2017, nobody could foresee, that Dou Yin APP will grow up in a breathtaking speed and become an online media platform ----- Nowadays, many people receive the daily news via Dou Yin APP and design promotions for their commercial products and services by Dou Yin APP. Dou Yin APP itself is now experiencing a big evolution from a normal short-video APP to an online media platform, and it is astonishing that Dou Yin APP has developed its homogeneous oversea APP ----- TikTok, and with the development of TikTok, the oversea business of Dou Yin APP is also getting closer and closer to its heyday.

The flourishing of Dou Yin APP mirrors the online media’s high-speed development in mainland China and the 15-year-history of changes of China’s media industry: from the traditional paper media to the new type of online media.

As an object of reference, Hong Kong’s online media develops not so fast as the online media in mainland China, since it has a mature and time-honored paper media industry, as the Freedom of Press in Hong Kong ranks a high level among East Asia, the prosperity of the newspaper industry of Hong Kong also ranks a high level among East Asia.

Hence, from the perspective of the media audiences in mainland China, the online media’s development in Hong Kong is in slow and diminished speed. However, the traditional newspaper industry is highly developed in Hong Kong, so in comparison, the development speed of online media seems slower and smoother in Hong Kong. In addition, due to cultural differences and differences in information browsing habits, media audiences in Hong Kong prefer to gain latest news from newspapers but browse entertainment information via online media. Thus, the audiences in Hong Kong also have the habit in using online media, but the distinction is the audiences in mainland China rely on online media in most scenes, the audiences in Hong Kong only rely on online media in some special scenes, like daily entertainment.

The flourishing of Dou Yin APP in mainland China is a positive and congratulation-worthy phenomenon, since it is the sign of the prosperity of online media’s development, not only in China, but also among the worlds. However, this phenomenon also reflexes many worrisome facts, like the strong dependence and strong addiction of Dou Yin, the misleading from false news and instilling unhealthy values, and so on.

As modern citizens in the era of online media, on the one hand, we must enhance our logical thinking and judgment abilities to distinguish false news and resist the invasion of false information; On the other hand, we should maintain an open mindset, embrace different perspectives, and learn from different opinions. This is a crucial ability for modern citizens in the new media era.

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