JOURNAL OF DHAMMA FOR LIFE ISSN (Online): 2822-048X

วารสารธรรมเพื่อชีวิต
JOURNAL OF DHAMMA FOR LIFE
ISSN: 2822-048X
https://soo8. tci-thaijo. org/index. php/dhammalife/index

Original Research Article DOI: 10.14456/jdl.2025.104

Guideline of DouYin Short Video Literacy to Chinese Youth

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Keywords:
Douyin; Media Literacy; Youth; Short Video; Changchun City

Article history:
Received: 06/12/2024
Revised: 10/01/2025
Accepted: 03/03/2025
Available online: 29/03/2025

How to Cite:
Kaifu et al. (2025) Guideline of DouYin Short Video Literacy to Chinese Youth. Journal Dhamma for Life, 31(1), 739-751.

ABSTRACT

This article mainly aims to 1) study the situation of DouYin short videos literacy to Chinese youth in JiLin Province 2) analyze DouYin short video literacy of Chinese youth people in JiLin Province. 3) propose guidelines to improve the media literacy of young Chinese people on DouYin. The research was mixed method which comprised of quantitative and qualitative research. The research instruments are questionnaire, document, in-depth interview, and non-participation observation. The populations came from Changchun city, JiLin Province's young people who aged between 18-23 years old. The sample size was 400. Online questionnaire was analyzed by using statistic as percentages, means.

The research findings revealed that: (1) Douyin short videos are a key part of youth culture, but the platform often emphasizes entertainment over education, with its recommendation algorithm creating an "information cocoon" that reinforces existing preferences. (2) The DouYin literacy of young people in Jilin Province shows a high dependency on DouYin for entertainment and information, but their literacy in discerning information, managing time, and addressing negative impacts requires improvement. (3) Improving the media literacy of young people in Jilin Province on DouYin requires a comprehensive approach involving platform responsibility, education and guidance, self-management, and family support.

Introduction

In recent years, short videos have become the most popular form of socialization and entertainment for human beings, and their clicks and attention have surpassed various media to reach the peak. By now TikTok has more than 1 billion active users worldwide (TikTok,2021). As of August 2020, including DouYin Volcano Edition, DouYin (the Chinese version of TikTok) more than 600 million daily active users. So, it can be said that DouYin has become a popular lifestyle followed by the public.

The theme of DouYin short videos is various, involving different aspects of life, and short videos use entertainment to deliver the views, through the huge traffic of DouYin platform to more youth people. Some issues such as consumerism, commercialization, and pan-entertainment are influencing young people in a way that is not easily noticed: based on the algorithm of the DouYin platform and the personal preferences of users, DouYin gives each user a customized information cocoon, where the consumer and commercial content is hidden in each "finger swipe down". Young people mostly use DouYin or TikTok for entertainment, but the DouYin content shows different effect on young people.

The influence of short videos on young people's lifestyles has become popular globally, much deeper, and less visible. Analysing the influence of the DouYin platform on youth will enable scholars and governments to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of short video platforms and make better judgments on business and cultural issues.

With the increase in the number of users, as a new form of pop culture, DouYin gradually shows its exaggerated commercialization and entertainment potential. DouYin takes attracting users' attention as its main competitiveness, and the best way to attract the public's attention is entertainment. Short videos integrate commercial product content into entertaining content, and based on the DouYin short video software algorithm, it can place these commercial ads more accurately to different user groups.

Especially in People’s republic of China, where the spending power and level of the public is rising, and DouYin users are mainly young people, it is easier to stimulate consumers' desire to buy with this more user-friendly way - a more advanced kind of soft advertising. This puts forward higher requirements for the literacy of young DouYin users

Objective

1. To study the situation of DouYin short videos literacy to Chinese youth in JiLin Province.
2. To analyze DouYin short video literacy of Chinese youth people in JiLin Province.
3. To propose guidelines to improve the media literacy of young Chinese people on DouYin.

Scope of Population/Sample

By 2022, The total population of Changchun City, Jilin Province is 9.10 million. (ChangChun Bureau Statistic,2024) In this study, the sample is about 400 active DouYin users at 18-23 years old in university.

Scope of Key Informants total 12 persons:

2 DouYin owner/ related (ByetDance Marketing staff & Product Manager)
2 DouYin influencer (lifestyle & girl’s beauty video creator)
2 Media Academic (Professor & associate professor, School of Media in University)

2 Media Society for Online Providers Association (Chang Chun New Media Industry Association, Responsible for Online public opinion monitoring & cultural publicity and promotion)

2 Parents Group (who's child is undergraduate)

2 Young Receivers (undergraduate students)

Scope of Duration/ Time

6 months (February – August 2023)

Scope of Area

Changchun City Jilin Province, China

Research Methodology

The research was mixed methodology research, including both qualitative and quantitative research. The research instruments are questionnaire, document, in-depth interview, and non-participation observation.

Research Result

Objective 1 To study the situation of DouYin short videos literacy to Chinese youth in JiLin Province

Table 1.1 Demographic data and Media selection

Name	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Your gender	male	187	46.75
	female	213	53.25
2. Your age is	18-20 years old	233	58.25
	21-23 years old	161	40.25
	24-26 years old	3	0.75
	27-29 years old	2	0.5
	30 years and above	1	0.25
3. What is your educational level?	primary school	0	0
	junior high school	0	0
	high school	1	0.25
	junior college	23	5.75
	Undergraduate	349	87.25
	Master's degree	26	6.5
	PhD Candidates	1	0.25
4. What is your occupation?	student	332	83
	Private enterprise employees	39	9.8
	State-owned enterprise employees	9	2.3

Name	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Public institutions/civil servants/government staff	5	1.3
	Freelancing	10	2.5
	Unemployed	5	1.3
	Other (please specify)	0	0
5. What is your monthly income (or living expenses)?	Below 1500 yuan	105	26.3
	1500-3000 Yuan	217	54.3
	3001-5000 Yuan	71	17.8
	5001-8000 Yuan	2	0.5
	8000 yuan or more	5	1.25
6.How long do you spend using DouYin every day? (Based on the average daily usage of DouYin in mobile phone screen time)	Less than 1 hour	43	10.75
	1-2 hours	95	23.75
	More than 2 hours	262	65.5

From table 1.1 researcher analyze that there are slightly more female respondents than male respondents in this survey, and their ages are concentrated between 18 and 23 years old, indicating that this is a group dominated by young people, which is consistent with the age range of young people in Changchun City, Jilin Province in this study. Most of the respondents have a high level of education, mainly undergraduates, and a small number of high school and master's students. This is basically consistent with the current educational level of young people in Changchun City, Jilin Province. It also reflects that their occupations are mainly students, and their income or living expenses are relatively low, mainly concentrated between 1,500 and 3,000 yuan. These characteristics indicate that some of this group may be in the learning stage. In general, their economic income is relatively low and their consumption capacity is limited, but they generally spend more time watching DouYin every day, which is suitable as the analysis object of this study.

Table 1.2: Media exposure of the youth at Changchun city, Jilin Province

Questions	Options	Quantity	percentage(%)
How many times do you watch DouYin every day (number of times you open the DouYin app)?	More than 5 times a day	233	60.5
	3-4 times a day	161	23
	1-2 times a day	3	13.5
When do you usually watch DouYin? (Multiple choice question)	Open only when necessary	2	3
	Before getting up	192	48

Questions	Options	Quantity	percentage(%)
	By public transportation	221	55.25
	Working or studying time	127	31.75
	Lunch break	180	45
	Before going to bed	340	85
	When going to the toilet	290	72.5
Why do you like watching DouYin? (Single-choice question)	Learn about information that you don't have access to in your daily life	63	15.75
	Get the latest news	24	6
	Interact with other DouYin users	15	3.75
	Like to watch short videos with interesting content/strong rhythm (such as popular dance/gesture dance/camera technique flow, etc.)	65	16.25
	Like to watch plot/joke/story videos	48	12
	Just relax by watching videos	185	46.25

From table 1.2 researcher found that young people in Changchun City, Jilin Province are highly dependent on DouYin. More than 65% of the respondents spend more than 2 hours on DouYin every day, and 60.5% of users open DouYin more than 5 times a day. The main time for young users to use DouYin is concentrated in fragmented time periods such as before going to bed, commuting and going to the toilet, but there are also 31.5 % of young users who watch DouYin during work or study time. These data reflect that DouYin is an important tool for relaxation and entertainment in the daily life of young people, rather than obtaining news or interacting with other users. It shows that young people have a high acceptance of emerging technologies and entertainment forms, and pursue instant entertainment and fast information acquisition. The content form of DouYin short videos just meets this demand. It attracts a large number of young users through short, concise, interesting and rhythmic content, which also shows that DouYin has been deeply integrated into the daily life of young people and has become their first choice for killing time and relaxing.

Table 1.3: DouYin program preference of youth

Your three favorite topics in DouYin	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
News (political/economic/social news, etc.)	58(14.5%)	14(3.5%)	29(7.2%)

Your three favorite topics in DouYin	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
Sports (fitness/sports knowledge/sports stars/sports game highlights, etc.)	57(14.2%)	36(9%)	32(8%)
Talent skills (handicraft/photography/painting/music/dance, etc.)	115(28.7%)	66(16.5%)	66(16.5%)
Plot interpretation (Internet celebrity "jokes"/plot short videos, etc.)	70(17.5%)	95(23.8%)	63(15.8%)
Film and TV plot commentary/film and TV work slices/film and TV work secondary creation	43(10.8%)	77(19.3%)	62(15.5%)
Lifestyle (including beauty/food/travel/cars/fashion/digital products, etc.)	41(10.3%)	61(15.3%)	87(21.8%)

From table 1.3 it can be seen that for young people in Changchun City, Jilin Province, the favorite type of DouYin short video ranked by preference is talent skills, the second is the short video of plot interpretation, and the third is the short video about lifestyle.

Problem of DouYin

As a popular social media platform, DouYin has become an important channel for young people to express themselves, discover new interests and connect with the world. Through short videos, young users can show their creativity and personality, and the DouYin algorithm can accurately recommend content that users are interested in, greatly enhancing the personalized experience. At the same time, DouYin also has some risks and challenges, as well as some negative influences and problems as follows:

In the in-depth interviews, different interviewees expressed the following views on the problems facing DouYin:

(1) Psychological dependence: As a stress relief tool, DouYin may cause young people to become dependent and prefer low-investment entertainment methods.

(2) Consumption guidance: DouYin influences youth culture and consumption through popular trends, but also reduces family interaction.

(3) Expanded horizons: DouYin can provide life and career advice, but some content may be unrealistic.

(4) Economic and cultural participation: DouYin promotes young people to participate in local economic and cultural development.

(5) Social function: DouYin has gradually become a social platform for young people, similar to the "second WeChat".

Objective 2 To analyze DouYin short video literacy of Chinese youth people in JiLin Province.

DouYin literacy includes several levels: (Kanokrat Yossakrai and others, 2019)

Level 1: Ability to access DouYin

Level 2: Understand and awareness about Douyin impact including positive and negative

Level 3: Ability to analysis and critiques Douyin application.
Level 4: learning development of DouYin analysis and critiques

Table 1.4: Impact of DouYin to the youth in different type of short videos

Content of Opinion	means	S.D.	Attitudinal tendency
The possible impact of DouYin on young people - news on DouYin will increase the mental stress of young people	3.41	0.78	Strongly agree
The news that young people learn about through DouYin is limited in authenticity and objectivity	3.64	0.71	Strongly agree
Sports videos encourage young people to participate in sports	3.73	0.79	Strongly agree
Sports videos could lead young people to gambling	2.37	0.94	agree at least
Videos of talent shows will lead young people to "chase stars" (such as singers/actors/idol groups, etc.)	3.53	0.75	Strongly agree
Videos created by influencers/celebrity accounts can make young people feel lost in the gap between their real lives and others	3.49	0.78	Strongly agree
Film and television commentary/film clips will make people miss many story details	3.41	0.86	Strongly agree
Film and television commentary videos will arouse young people's interest in watching full movies	3.73	0.85	Strongly agree
Plot interpretation videos can have negative impacts on young people’s values and emotions	3.13	0.98	Strongly agree

Content of Opinion	means	S.D.	Attitudinal tendency
Plot interpretation videos will help young people pay more attention to public welfare	3.65	0.77	Strongly agree
Plot interpretation videos tend to be overly entertaining and meaningless	3.43	0.72	Strongly agree
The actions and language of characters in Plot interpretation videos can influence young people's behavior in real life.	3.59	0.76	Strongly agree
Life record/casual short videos will lead young people to over-consume	3.51	0.66	Strongly agree
Life record/casual short videos can cause young people to have a wrong understanding of others and the social environment	3.41	0.77	Strongly agree
Popular science videos will spread false history and knowledge to young people	3.25	0.84	Strongly agree
Knowledge popularization videos can help young people learn more about information outside of their personal knowledge areas	3.8	0.82	Strongly agree

From Table 1.4, it reflects the multi-dimensional impact of the DouYin platform on young people in Changchun City, Jilin Province. On the positive side, sports videos are considered to be effective in encouraging young people to participate in sports activities (average score 3.73), and popular science videos are excellent in expanding knowledge and have received high evaluations (average score 3.8). In addition, film and television review videos can stimulate young people's interest in watching full movies (average score 3.73), showing the positive potential of DouYin in education and entertainment.

However, the negative impact is also obvious. Young people are concerned about the authenticity and objectivity of the news content received through DouYin (average score 3.64), and are worried that this form of news may increase psychological pressure (average score 3.41). Entertainment videos such as talent shows may prompt young people to chase stars excessively (average score 3.53), while film and television interpretation and life recording videos may mislead young people's values and understanding of the social environment. In particular, plot interpretation videos may not only lead to negative impacts on values and

emotions (average score 3.13), but are also regarded as too entertaining and meaningless (average score 3.43).

DouYin short video literacy to Chinese youth to JiLin Province

From in-depth interview of 12 key informants, the results as follow:

Positive Impact

1. Self-expression and social interaction: DouYin provides young people with an important channel to express themselves and participate in social discussions

2. Cultural communication: DouYin promotes the dissemination of traditional culture and local content, attracting more young people's attention

3. Skill learning and confidence improvement: Beauty and fashion content help young people quickly learn new skills and fashion trends and enhance their confidence

4. Healthy life motivation: Fitness, diet and personal growth content motivate young people to pursue a healthier lifestyle

5. Broadening horizons and personalized content: DouYin's decentralization and algorithm push allow young people to access more personalized content and broaden their horizons.

Negative Impact

1. Excessive entertainment and consumerism: Long-term use of DouYin may lead to problems of excessive entertainment and consumerism.

2. False information dissemination: Bad or false content may be spread on the platform, which has a negative impact on young people.

3. Anxiety and inferiority: Life-sharing content may make some young people feel anxious or inferior because they cannot achieve the ideal state in the video.

4. Distraction and fragmented thinking: Long-term use of more than two hours may lead to distraction and fragmented thinking.

5. Irregular work and rest and mental health: Excessive use of DouYin may lead to irregular work and rest, reduced social interaction, and increased risk of anxiety and depression.

From In-Depth Interview Content Shows That Douyin Has a Positive Impact on Young People in Many Aspects

1. Inspiring sports and healthy lifestyle:

The table data shows that sports videos can effectively inspire young people to participate in sports activities (means 3.73), and through fitness, diet and personal growth content, young people can also be inspired to pursue a healthier lifestyle. This is consistent with the views of DouYin lifestyle blogger ZTQ, who mentioned that these contents have a positive impact on young people.

2. Broadening horizons and expanding knowledge:

Popular science videos are believed to help young people expand their knowledge areas (means 3.8), which is also supported in the interview. Media scholar TXQ pointed out that DouYin's decentralization and algorithm push make the content more personalized and targeted, helping young people to access knowledge and content that cannot be obtained in

daily life. DouYin user ZMR also said that through DouYin, he was exposed to a lot of content that he could not see normally, which broadened his horizons.

3. Cultural communication and interest stimulation:

Traditional culture and local content are spread through DouYin, attracting more young people's attention (positive cultural influence mentioned by BWB), and the movie review videos in the table can also stimulate young people's interest in watching full movies (means 3.73), showing the positive potential of DouYin in education and entertainment.

4. Skill learning and self-expression:

Content such as beauty and fashion allow young people to quickly learn new skills and improve their self-confidence (means 3.49), which is consistent with the views of beauty blogger Zou, who emphasized the role of such content in improving the confidence of young women. DouYin user LS also said that he learned a lot of practical skills through DouYin and made like-minded friends.

Although Douyin Has Many Positive Effects, The Table and Interview also Reveal Some of Its Negative Effects

1. Psychological pressure and content authenticity

The table shows that news content may increase the psychological pressure of young people (means 3.41), and the news content on DouYin often lacks authenticity and objectivity (means 3.64). This is consistent with the problem of false information dissemination mentioned by BWB, which may cause young people to misjudge information.

2. Consumerism and vanity:

Life record videos may lead to excessive consumption among young people (means 3.51). In the interview, Han also pointed out that one of the negative effects of DouYin is that it has promoted consumerism, especially some star-chasing or life sharing content that makes young people pay more attention to material consumption and even have confusion about their sense of self-worth.

3. Addiction and time management issues:

Long-term use of DouYin may cause young people to become addicted, affecting their learning and life rhythm (such as the learning delay caused by the use of DouYin mentioned by ZMR). TXQ also mentioned that long-term viewing of DouYin can lead to distraction and cognitive decline, especially more than two hours of use may lead to fragmented thinking.

4. Negative impact of values:

Certain videos, such as plot explanation content, may have a negative impact on young people's values and emotions (mean 3.13), which is consistent with what ZTQ mentioned, that is, life sharing videos may make young people feel anxious or inferior because they cannot achieve the ideal state in the video.

5. The impact of social and living habits:

Excessive use of DouYin will lead to reduced social interaction among young people and lead to irregular living habits (Zhang pointed out that long-term use of DouYin may increase the risk of anxiety and depression). This impact has also been concerned by the parent group. Parent WY mentioned that children may waste a lot of precious time because of being addicted to entertainment content.

Conclusion

Young DouYin users in Changchun City, Jilin Province show the following DouYin literacy:

Level 1 - Ability to Access DouYin: Most young people are proficient in accessing and using DouYin frequently, integrating it into their daily routines, especially during fragmented moments like commuting or breaks.

Level 2 - Understand and awareness about DouYin impact including positive and negative: They show some awareness of the platform's positive and negative effects. For example, they recognize DouYin's role in promoting healthy lifestyles and expanding knowledge through educational videos. However, they are also conscious of issues such as the authenticity of news content, noting concerns about misinformation and psychological stress.

Level 3 - Ability to analysis and critiques Douyin application: Some young people exhibit critical thinking, particularly regarding entertainment content like celebrity and lifestyle videos. They can identify and critique the consumerism and distorted social values that these videos may promote. This indicates a growing capacity to analyze the influence of media on their values and self-perception, as highlighted by parents and media scholars in the interviews.

Level 4 - learning development of DouYin analysis and critiques: A portion of the youth uses Douyin for educational purposes, expanding their knowledge in areas they wouldn't typically access in school or everyday life. The platform's decentralized algorithm helps them encounter personalized and diverse content, furthering their learning. This demonstrates their potential for developing a more advanced level of media literacy, where they not only consume content but also reflect on its educational value.

While young people in Changchun exhibit foundational media literacy skills on Douyin, they still need to further develop their critical thinking, content selection, and time management skills to fully navigate the platform's potential negative impacts, such as over-entertainment and misinformation.

Objective 3 Propose guidelines to improve the media literacy of young Chinese people on DouYin.

To improve the media literacy of young Chinese people on Douyin, several strategies can be implemented across 4 key areas:

1. Platform Responsibility: Platforms should enhance content review systems to ensure authenticity and use algorithms to prioritize beneficial content like health and educational videos. By doing so, young users can improve their ability to critically assess the information they encounter.

2. Education and Guidance: Schools should introduce media literacy courses to teach students how to evaluate information reliability, recognize fake news, and responsibly engage with social media. Mental health education can also provide tools to manage negative

emotions caused by social media use, fostering emotional resilience and a balanced relationship with social media.

3. Self-Management: Encourage young people to develop time management skills and consciously select valuable content on Douyin. By learning to allocate their time wisely, they can avoid distractions from meaningless entertainment, ultimately improving their focus and content discernment. In addition, guiding youth to apply critical thinking when consuming content helps them avoid blindly following trends and enhances their ability to express themselves authentically.

4. Family Support: Parents should actively communicate with their children about their social media habits, offering guidance to help them balance study, life, and entertainment. Furthermore, parents can model responsible social media usage, setting a positive example and helping their children develop healthy media consumption habits, enhancing their overall media literacy.

Discussion

This study reveals that DouYin has a significant impact on the media literacy of youth in Jilin Province. The platform's algorithm tends to favor entertaining and personalized content, which leads to youth being trapped in "information cocoons," limiting their ability to access diverse information and develop critical thinking. Furthermore, the lack of media literacy education among young people affects their ability to discern the authenticity of information, increasing their susceptibility to misinformation.

The limitations of this research include the relatively small sample size and its focus on a specific region. Future studies could expand to other regions to explore differences in media literacy among youth from various cultural backgrounds. Additionally, further research could examine how platforms like DouYin can effectively promote educational content to enhance media literacy.

In summary, while this study highlights key issues related to youth media literacy, achieving significant improvements will require collaborative efforts from platforms, educational systems, and families.

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