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Creation Process for Professional Content Creators through DouYin Short Video in People's Republic of China

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ABSTRACT

This study aims 1) To study the situation of creation process for professional content creators through DouYin short video in People's Republic of China; 2) To analyse creative activity of DouYin short video production and the opinion of professional content creators through DouYin short video; 3) To analyse the relation between central, local government and professional content creators; and 4) To provide optimized suggestion for general content creator to transition into professionalization

The research was mixed methodology research. The sample size of DouYin professional content creators in People's Republic of China, obtained by simple sampling method, totalling 400. The key informants were totally 23. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire, in-depth interview, and non-participatory observation. The theoretical frameworks applied include communication theory, uses and gratifications theory, media consumption theory, sign consumption theory, structure and agency theory, and algorithm-driven communication models, providing a systematic analytical framework for understanding the communication behaviours and strategies of professional content creators.

The findings reveal that the creation process comprises of (1) pprofessional content creators attract specific users through symbolic expression and brand building, (2) knowledge-based content faces limitations in achieving widespread dissemination due to fragmented consumption patterns and algorithmic biases, and (3) the central and local government policies impact to content creation both positive aspect as content dissemination promotion and negative aspect as impose constraints on creative freedom. Based on these insights, this study proposes a pathway for creators to achieve professionalization, including personal branding, content quality optimization, and cross-

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platform expansion strategies. These findings not only offer new perspectives on professional content creation in China's short video ecosystem but also provide practical guidance for the platform's creators and policymakers.

Introduction

Short videos, as one of the most influential media forms today, have rapidly become an essential channel for disseminating knowledge, sharing experiences, and promoting brands due to their short production cycles, diverse content, and high engagement. Particularly in China, DouYin has evolved into a comprehensive platform that combines entertainment with knowledge dissemination. However, despite the fast dissemination and wide reach of short videos, the distribution of knowledge content is constrained by users' fragmented consumption behaviors and the algorithm's bias toward entertainment-oriented content.

How professional content creators can balance aligning with platform algorithms, meeting policy requirements, and satisfying users' diverse needs is the core issue of this study. The research objectives are:

1. To study the situation of creation process for professional content creators through DouYin short video in People's Republic of China.

2. To analyst creative activities of DouYin short video production and the opinion of professional content creators through DouYin short video.

3. To analyst the relations between central, local government and professional content creators.

4. To provide optimized suggestions for general content creators through DouYin short video to professionalization.

This study not only provides optimization pathways for content creators on DouYin but also aims to uncover the complex interactions between policies, platforms, and creators. These interactions simultaneously constrain creators' creative freedom and provide guidance for content quality and dissemination. The significance of this study lies in offering theoretical support for academic research in related fields, providing empirical evidence for policymakers and platform managers, and offering practical suggestions for creators.

Using various theory both communication theories and sociology theory, this study systematically examines the creation process of professional short video content creators through a mixed research methodology as quantitative research and qualitative research, research instruments including document, questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and non-participatory observation. The results will provide new perspectives on understanding creators' communication behaviors and their roles within the platform ecosystem.

Theoretical Framework and Research Model

1. The study adopts the following theories as its theoretical foundation:

(1) Communication Theory

Communication theory provides a framework for analyzing the production and dissemination effects of short video content. According to this theory, the communication process consists of four basic elements: the sender, the message, the channel, and the receiver. By analyzing how short video content creators optimize these elements to attract

their target audience, this study explores the core mechanisms and key success factors of short video communication.

(2) Structure and Agency Theory

Proposed by Anthony Giddens, structure and agency theory provides an analytical framework for examining the relationship between short video content creators and social structures, such as government policies. This theory emphasizes the constraints that structures impose on individual actions while recognizing that individual actions also influence the development of social structures. This study utilizes this theory to analyze how content creators on DouYin short video in China adjust their creative strategies within policy frameworks.

(3) Symbolic Consumption Theory

Based on Baudrillard's symbolic consumption theory, consumption behaviors in modern society are not limited to the use value of items but also focus on their symbolic meanings. In the dissemination of short videos, content creators establish emotional connections with their audience through visual symbols, linguistic styles, and personalized creator personas. This study uses this theory to explore how symbolic consumption impacts the dissemination effects of short video content and user engagement.

2. Based on the above theories, this study constructs the following conceptual framework. There are many factors of creation process to build up professional content creators through DouYin short video such as 1) the professional content creator background which comprises of demographic data, short video exposure, and short video consumption, 2) opinion of professional content creator through DouYin short video, 3) creative activity of DouYin short video production and the relations between central, local government and professional content creators.

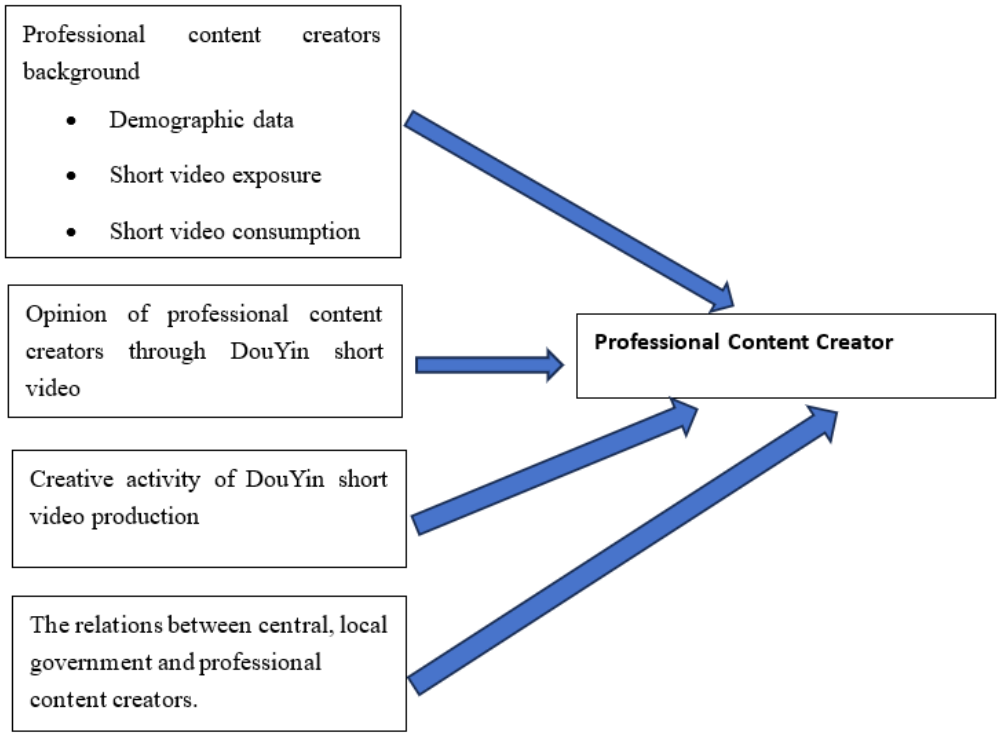


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research, to systematically explore the creation process of professional content creators on the DouYin short video and their relationships with policies, the platform, and users. The chosen methodology aims to comprehensively reveal creators' creative behaviors, communication strategies, and the challenges they face.

1. Research Design

This study adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods:

2. Population & sample and Key informants

Quantitative research:

Population: professional content creators in China is 20,000. (Source: Research Report on the Development of China's Online Audiovisual Industry (2023, 2024)).

Sample size: The sample size was determined by Taro Yamane Formula (e=0.05) obtained by simple random sampling method, totaling 400.

Qualitative research:

There are 23 key informants. Detail as follow:

5 professional content creators comprise of 1 broadcasting and hosting content creator, 1 English speaking/oral practice content creator, 1 dermatology content creator, 1 mental health content creator, and 1 fitness content creator

4 industry experts comprise of 1 Communication Arts lecturer, 1 Application expert, 1 local government who responsible about information of new media, and 1 central government about information of new media

14 of their users comprise of 2 High School Students, 2 Undergraduate Students, 2 Master's Students, 2 Doctoral Students, 2 Media Professionals, 2 IT Professionals, and 2 General Audience Members

3. Research instruments

3.1 Questionnaire:

The questionnaire comprises of 4 sections as

Section 1 Basic Information (1.1demographic data, 1.2 short video exposure, 1.3 short video consumption, short video consumption)

Section 2 Creative activities of short video professional content creators

Section 3 Opinion of professional content creator through DouYin short video

Section 4 The relations between central, local government and professional content creators. (4.1 The relations between central government and professional content creators, 4.2 The relations between local government and professional content creators)

Section 5 Suggestion for general content creators on DouYin short video production

3.2 In-depth Interview:

The results of this study were obtained from interviews with 23 key informants, all of whom are associated with the DouYin short video platform. Among them are 5 DouYin content creators, 4 industry experts and managers, and 14 general users.

3.3 Non-participatory Observation

Detail of non-participatory observation for 10 Professional content creators (who are key informants) comprise of both anthropology dimension as act, activity, meaning of activity, relationship, participation, and setting and communication dimension as lives, work, short

video production processes, and account performance of short video content creators through online or face-to-face methods.

Table 1 Detail of non-participatory observation for Profession content creators

Anthropology Issue	Communication Issue
Act	lives
Activity	Work
Meaning of act and activity	Short video production process
Relationship	Account performance of short video content creators through online method
Participation	Account performance of short video content creators through face-to-face method
Setting	-

3.4 Documents

Documents comprise of 3.4.1 Overview of China and Usage of Short Video Platforms and 3.4.2 Main Area and Content Characteristics of Professional Content Creator on DouYin Short Video

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Data collection of Qualitative research

3.5.1.1 Documents

Setting Issues to collect such as 1) Overview of China and Usage of Short Video Platforms 2) Main Area and Content Characteristics of Professional Content Creator on DouYin Short Video

3.5.1.2 In-depth interview with 23 key informants. The steps of in-depth interview are 1) Building familiar with key informants 2) Telling key informants about the research topic and objective, and ask for permission to in-depth interview 3) Asking permission to record sound and picture while interview 4) Writing the information from in depth interview everyday (if researcher stay in the field site) 5) Check the information which receive from key informants (if not complete, researcher should to ask for in-depth interview further)

3.5.1.3 non-participatory observation: Observed 10 professional content creators (who are key informants). The observation comprises of anthropology dimension and communication dimension. The steps of non-participatory observation are 1) Set issues to observe 2) Field notes and take pictures as the issues both anthropology dimension and communication dimension 3) Written meaning of act and activities of 10 professional content creators 4) Check data for completing observation

3.5.2 Data collection of Quantitative research

3.5.2.1 Sending questionnaire through Online（https://www.wjx.cn/）

3.5.2.2 Telling samples to send back in 3 days

3.5.2.3 When sampling send it back, researcher will check the complete answers.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Data analysis of Qualitative research Content Analysis and Typology

3.6.2 Data analysis of Quantitative research

Statistic: Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard deviation (S.D.)

3.7 Data Verification

3.7.1 Data verification of Qualitative research by using Triangulation method with adding variety types for building reliability for the research

3.7.2 Data verification of Quantitative research

After create questionnaire, researcher has to find validity of the instrument by Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) from 5 experts. Moreover, researcher has found reliability by Cronbach's Alpha which section opinion of professional content creator is 0.783, section The relations between central government and professional content creators is 0.941, and section Relations between local government and professional content creators is 0.966.

Research Results

1. Current Situation of Communication for Professional Content Creators

The study finds that DouYin's recommendation algorithm favors entertainment content with high engagement rates, while knowledge-based content often struggles to gain sufficient recommendation weight due to lower user interaction. This limits the reach of professional content creators. Despite the high social value of their content, which attracts a niche audience of loyal followers, the overall coverage remains low. Additionally, DouYin users prefer fragmented consumption, favoring instant information or entertainment-driven content. This presents significant challenges for professional creators to convey profound and engaging information within a short time frame.

2. Creative Activities and Perspectives of Professional Content Creators

The study reveals that professional content creators typically adopt a modular creative process, including content planning, script design, shooting, and post-production editing. This approach ensures content quality while improving production efficiency. However, the time constraints of short videos reduce the depth of content, requiring creators to balance appeal and professionalism. Some creators experiment with dramatic performances or humorous narratives to attract viewers but worry these methods may compromise the rigor of their content. Additionally, a lack of technology and resources poses significant challenges, as the absence of professional team support makes it difficult to consistently produce high-quality content.

Table 2 Primary Types of Content Creation

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Life sharing	260	65.0%
Art	42	10.5%
Language Learning	24	6.0%
Technology	18	4.5%
Other	18	4.5%
Culture	14	3.5%
Sports	13	3.25%
History	6	1.5%
Economics	4	1.0%
Health and Medicine	1	0.25%

Table 3 The Most Common Sources of Creative Inspiration in Content Creation

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Own research and knowledge	200	50.0%
2) Videos from other creators	112	28.0%
3) Books and articles	35	8.75%
5) Other	34	8.5%
4) Audience suggestions and feedback	19	4.75%

Table 4 Tools and Software Frequently Used in Content Creation

Option	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Video editing software (Kuaishou, DouYin, JianYing etc)	1 Yes	367	91.75%
	0 No	33	8.25%
2) Image processing software (Photoshop, Canva, etc.)	0 No	329	82.25%
	1 Yes	71	17.75%
3) Data analysis tools (DouYin's Built-in Analytics Tools, third-party tools, etc.)	0 NO	360	90%
	1 Yes	40	10%
4) Other Tools	0 NO	396	99.0%
	1 Yes	4	1.0%

Table 5 What platforms do you promote your video content? (more than one answer)

	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) DouYin	1 Yes	339	84.75%
	0 No	61	15.25%
2) Xiaohongshu	1 Yes	114	28.5%
	0 No	286	71.5%
3) Bilibili	1 Yes	58	14.5%
	0 No	342	85.5%
4) WeChat video accounts	1 Yes	69	17.25%
	0 No	331	82.75%
5) Weibo	1 Yes	23	5.75%
	0 No	377	94.25%
6) Other	1 Yes	16	4.0%
	0 No	384	96.0%

Table 6 How do you evaluate the dissemination effectiveness of your videos?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Views	187	46.75%
2) Likes	154	38.5%
3) Comments	31	7.75%
5) Audience feedback	13	3.25%
4) Shares	13	3.25%
6) Other	2	0.5%

Table 7 How do you collect audience feedback? (More than one answer)

	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Comments section	1 Yes	368	92.0%
	0 No	32	8.0%
2) Direct messages	0 No	272	68.0%
	1Yes	128	32.0%
3) Surveys	0 No	363	90.75%
	1Yes	37	9.25%
4) Live interactions	0 No	371	92.75%
	1Yes	29	7.25%
5) Other	0 No	398	99.5%
	1Yes	2	0.5%

Table 8 How do you interact with your audience? (more than one answer)

	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Reply to comments	1Yes	376	94.0%
	0No	24	6.0%
2) Host live interactive sessions	0No	351	87.75%
	1Yes	49	12.25%
3) Post Q&A videos	0No	357	89.25%
	1Yes	43	10.75%
4) Community activities	0No	383	95.75%
	1Yes	17	4.25%
5) Other	0No	397	99.25%
	1Yes	3	0.75%

Table 9 What is the most common feedback that you receive from your audience regarding your content?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Content (Interesting/ Useful)	252	63.0%
4) Interaction (More/reduce interaction)	77	19.25%
3) Feedback (Positive/negative feedback)	38	9.5%
2) Production (High-quality/ low-quality video production)	33	8.25%

Table 10 Do you adjust your content creation based on audience feedback?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 Yes	330	82.5%
2 No	70	17.5%

Table 11 If yes, what adjustments do you typically make? (More than one answer)

	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Content (Interesting/useful content/change topics)	1 Yes	305	76.25%
	0 No	95	23.75%
2) Production (High-quality/low-quality video production/improve video quality, adjust video duration)	1 Yes	228	57.0%
	0 No	172	43.0%
3) Feedback (Positive/negative feedback)	0 No	321	80.25%
	1 Yes	79	19.75%
4) Interaction (Increase/decrease interaction)	0 No	298	74.5%
	1 Yes	102	25.5%

Table 12 What is the biggest challenge you face in content creation?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Lack of creativity	117	29.25%
4) Lack of audience engagement	88	22.0%
2) Time management	78	19.5%
5) Laziness	53	13.25%
3) Technical issues	48	12.0%
6) Not earning enough money	13	3.25%
7) Other	3	0.75%

Table 13 What help or resources do you wish to receive for content creation and dissemination? (more than one answer)

	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1) Creative guidance	1	275	68.75%
	0	125	31.25%
2) Technical training	1	208	52.0%
	0	192	48.0%
3) Equipment support	0	241	60.25%
	1	159	39.75%
4) Team support	0	266	66.5%
	1	134	33.5%
5) Promotion resources	0	238	59.5%
	1	162	40.5%
6) Other	1	0	0%
	0	400	100.0%

Table 14 What are your future content creation plans?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Enhance video quality	170	42.5%
Expand content scope	110	27.5%
Earn more money	70	17.5%
Increase interaction frequency	44	11.0%
Other	6	1.5%

Table 15 What is the most kind of persona have you established?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Someone who learns and grows together with the audience	211	52.75%
Sharer of skills and life guidance	61	15.25%
Traveler and cultural explorer	54	13.5%
Expert in a specific field	47	11.75%
Other	22	5.5%
Commentator on current affairs and societal analyst	5	1.25%

Table 16 How do you establish the most persona that you choose?

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Providing high-quality, in-depth content	117	29.25%
Interacting with and responding to the audience	94	23.5%
Displaying expertise in a field	88	22.0%
Sharing personal experiences and stories to demonstrate authenticity and relatability	80	20.0%
Consistent brand image and visual design	12	3.0%
Other	7	1.75%
Collaborating with experts from other fields and gaining their recognition and endorsement	2	0.5%

3. The Dual Impact of Government Policies on Creation

The study finds that the central government promotes the dissemination of positive content through policy frameworks, while local governments encourage creators to focus on regional cultural characteristics with subsidies and policy support. Creators must balance policy requirements with audience demands, innovating in their expression to meet both policy directives and audience expectations. For example, by integrating traditional culture with contemporary topics, creators use edutainment to share knowledge. However, overly strict regulation by platforms when implementing government policies can sometimes limit

creators' creative freedom. As a result, creators must continuously adjust their strategies under the dual pressure of policies and audience expectations.

4. Pathway for Ordinary Content Creators to Professional Development

The study proposes a pathway model for ordinary content creators to transition to professional development. Firstly, creators should analyze audience needs, clarify content positioning, and gradually build a personal brand. Secondly, by enhancing short video production skills, creators can transform complex knowledge into more engaging formats, increasing content appeal and dissemination. Additionally, creators should plan their development in stages: initially meeting user demands, then improving content quality in the mid-term, and finally expanding their influence through increased interaction and cross-platform collaboration. The study emphasizes that while enhancing their professional growth, creators should also focus on the social value of their content.

Through these findings, the study systematically reveals the main characteristics and challenges of professional content creators on DouYin in terms of communication practices, creative activities, and policy interactions. It also provides practical guidance for ordinary creators aiming to transition into professional development.

Discussion

Researcher conforms with Tang (2020, 2-3) that DouYin short video is suitable for users from shorter and convenient to create with rich creative subject matter and multiple creative subjects.

DouYin application which creators to users' demand for instant gratification, offering professional content creators' opportunities for innovative communication while presenting challenges. Creators can use intuitive visual content to quickly convey knowledge and attract niche audiences in educational and cultural fields. However, the fragmented model limits content depth, and algorithms favoring high-interaction videos restrict the reach of knowledge-based content. Users' behaviors of "instant consumption" and "surface-level interaction" further weaken the dissemination effect of such content. Creators must strike a balance between attractiveness and professionalism.

Regarding Research Objective 2: Creative Activities and Perspectives

Professional content creators improve efficiency through a modular workflow, but the time constraints of short videos lead to fragmented content. Creators use symbolic elements, such as signature tones or visual symbols, to enhance professionalism while experimenting with innovative formats to attract viewers. Unequal access to technology and resources puts some creators under competitive pressure. Additionally, creators face increased difficulty as they continually innovate to balance audience engagement with content depth.

Regarding Research Objective 3: The Relationship Between Government Policies and Creators

The central government promotes mainstream value content through policy frameworks, while local governments provide funding support to encourage the dissemination of regional culture. Policies provide guidance for content creation but also limit creative freedom due to strict review processes. Creators adjust their dissemination strategies to balance policy compliance with audience demands. Meanwhile, platforms assist in policy implementation through algorithms and review mechanisms, though excessive regulation may stifle innovation.

The collaborative efforts of governments, platforms, and creators are gradually optimizing the dissemination ecosystem for knowledge-based content.

Recommendations

Based on an in-depth analysis of the communication practices and creative activities of professional content creators on the DouYin platform, this study offers specific recommendations for governments, platforms, and content creators, while also suggesting directions for future research. These recommendations aim to optimize the short video ecosystem, promote the dissemination of knowledge-based content, and support creators in achieving sustainable development.

1.Government-Level Recommendations

Promoting Media Literacy Education: Incorporate media literacy education into all levels of the education system to help the public, especially young people, improve their ability to evaluate short video content. This will not only prevent users from falling into "information cocoons" but also enhance societal media literacy through community and school programs.

Optimizing Regulatory Mechanisms: Collaborate with platforms to establish graded review standards, providing targeted support and financial incentives for high-quality knowledge-based content.

Encouraging Cross-Cultural Communication: Support outstanding creators in integrating Chinese culture with modern technology to disseminate content globally through short videos, enhancing the international influence of knowledge-based content.

2.Platform-Level Recommendations

Optimizing Algorithm Recommendation Mechanisms: Balance the recommendation frequency of entertainment and knowledge content by creating a "Knowledge Recommendation" section on the homepage, making it easier for users to access high-quality knowledge videos.

Providing Professional Support Tools: Offer creators advanced tools such as data analytics and video editing features to help them better understand audience needs and improve content quality.

Building Knowledge Content Communities: Establish community sections for knowledge-based content to encourage interactions between creators and users, enhancing audience engagement.

Supporting Government Policies: Launch special incentive programs to support knowledge content creation, improving its dissemination effect.

3.Content Creator Recommendations

Improving Content Quality: Focus on enhancing scientific accuracy while making knowledge content more appealing through contextualization and narrative techniques.

Building a Personal Brand: Develop a clear personal brand identity by maintaining consistent content style and collaborating with professionals to strengthen brand recognition.

Strengthening Interaction with Audiences: Engage with audiences through live streaming or responding to comments to increase user retention.

Expanding Influence Across Platforms: Distribute content across multiple platforms and combine it with offline activities to broaden reach. Explore monetization strategies such as developing online courses or offering paid services to balance personal growth and commercial value.

4.Future Research Directions

Exploring Cross-Cultural Dissemination: Investigate the acceptance of knowledge-based content in different cultural contexts and the impact of cross-cultural communication.

Analyzing Algorithmic Impacts: Study the long-term influence of platform algorithms on the dissemination of knowledge-based content and their role in shaping user consumption habits.

Assessing Educational and Psychological Impacts: Examine the role of short videos in adolescent education and mental health to evaluate their social educational functions.

Balancing Commercialization and Social Value: Analyze the balance between creators' commercial success and social value, exploring future trends and technological innovations in short video platforms.

These recommendations not only provide guidance for governments, platforms, and content creators but also lay a foundation for the sustainable development and dissemination optimization of knowledge-based short videos.

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