Introduction to Digital Humanities and Social Analytics:

Project proposal and group charter

Research question

Is there a correlation between higher education levels and negative attitudes towards mainstream ideology as presented in short video content on *Douyin*?

Thesis statement

Our analysis of the dataset revealed that some respondents expressed the offence that traditional elements/mainstream ideologies caused to them. Such groups appear to be positively correlated in the dataset with those with higher education and those from more economically developed areas. Therefore, the research direction was set to investigate the correlation based on demographic information.

Description of the dataset

The subject matter of the dataset (Xinyu; Mohamed, 2023) revolves around the perceptions of young people in mainland China regarding the dissemination of government propaganda and socialist culture content on short video platforms, particularly Douyin (Huang, 2021). It focuses on media consumption habits, cultural choices, and attitudes toward mainstream culture/subculture(s) in the context of short videos.

This dataset was drawn from a series of web-based questions distributed among Chinese youth aged 18-30. It was created by Li Xinyu (affiliated with the Centre for Research in Media and Communication at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) together with Sabariah Mohamed Salleh as the supervisor and reviewer/editor of the dataset.

The questionnaire contains 331 valid responses from participants across 135 cities in China, including variables and information related to demography, media consumption behaviour (content preferences) and cultural attitudes (Ma, Z. H, 2013). Furthermore, the data fields

include single-choice/multiple-choice quizzes and seven-dimensional scale questions, stored along with the answers as raw data (.CSV file) and data dictionary (codebook in .pdf format). There is no need for format conversion unless the data needs to be processed in a specialised tool. On the other hand, the data exposed is not enough to answer our respective research question, so more exploration is called for.

Additionally, the dataset could be used to address various research questions about media preferences, engagement with political (Zhao, J., & Zhang, 2024) and cultural themes (choices between mainstream and subcultural content), perceptions of government propaganda, geographic and demographic comparisons etc.

However, it has its limitations. Being cross-sectional, it cannot track changes in attitudes over time. It relatively lacks qualitative data (restricting exploration of the nuanced reasons behind youth preferences) and it cannot be applied largely in international comparisons. Moreover, it does not cover traditional media consumption or detailed psychological profiling (why do consumers choose to watch a certain kind of content? Why not any other?)

While the dataset includes responses from 135 cities, it is heavily skewed towards urban areas, which may not accurately reflect the behaviours of youth in rural or less developed regions. On top of that, by focusing on individuals 18-30, the dataset overlooks the perspectives of other significant age groups.

It is also important to notice the gender imbalance (68.88% females), as well as occupation imbalance (mostly students), a cultural and political bias in self-reporting (due to political sensitivity around critiques of the government that may result in the underreporting of their negative perceptions -Yin&Yiyi& Fung, 2017), limitations in the survey format (oversimplification) and time of research (synchronic study).

In order to find an answer to our research question, we will need to collect further information (additional data) and follow a detailed step-by-step process (which is yet to be elucidated).

Our main focus are data sets related to education level and occupation, as well as perceptions of mainstream Chinese cultural content on *Douyin*, which are to be integrated with additional data sets or external sources to facilitate a more thorough analysis.

Action plan

We will use the pandas library of Python to start our research on the dataset. We will inspect the structure of the dataset to identify which columns are relevant to our research question; those specifically related to education levels and negative attitude towards mainstream ideology. Then we will explore the dataset visually and statistically. We will show the distribution of education levels and negative attitudes between participants of the study and try to find a correlation between both. We will display this using the statistical data visualisation options that Python has to offer (seaborn).

We can enrich the data by adding and controlling other variables. For example: economic background or geographic location. Both these factors could influence how users react to mainstream ideologies on the Douyin platform. Using p-values, we can examine the statistical significance of each factor, which allows us to model the individual effect of education levels while keeping the other variables on a constant level. Then our results will show whether negative attitudes can be explained by education level or that other factors, like economic background or regional differences have an effect as well.

References

*(Some in-depth references will be omitted due to the necessary summarization process)

Li, Xinyu; Mohamed Salleh, Sabariah (2023), "A Dataset of Young People's Perception on Dissemination of Government Propaganda and Socialist Culture Content in China.", Mendeley Data, V1, doi: 10.17632/mzptp5cmr7.1

Chow Yiu Fai, Chow Yiu Fai, Living with Their Own Images, Caring in Times of Precarity, 10.1007/978-3-319-76898-4_2, (51-89), (2018).

Huang, H. Z. (2021). From Confrontation to Dialogue: Development and Reflection on Mobile Short Video in the Context of Youth Subculture. *Journal of Hengyang Normal University*, 42(01), 106–112. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13914/j.cnki.cn43-1453/z.2021.01.017

Yang Lei . Research on the image shaping of mainstream culture in contemporary China[D].2017.

A study on the content, characteristics and influencing factors of youth online political participation: Based on text analysis of relevant materials from seven Chinese forums [J]. Qi Guanghong, Wang Jianying, Yang Zhiqiang. Chinese Youth Research . 2012(10)

Ma, Z. H. (2013). 2012 Research Strategy on Chinese Youth Subculture. *Youth Exploration*, 06, 5–12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.13583/j.cnki.issn1004-3780.2013.06.003

Wang, T. Q., Tian, Y., & Xu, Z. H. (2023). Study on the Impact and Development of the Construction of Contemporary Mainstream and Subcultural Accommodation. *PR Magazine*, 14, 22–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16645/j.cnki.cn11-5281/c.2023.14.056

Zhang, G. Y. (2007). The impact of postmodernist thinking on youth subcultures. *Contemporary Youth Research*, 01, 35–47. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1006-1789.2007.01.008

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice, Harvard University Press, 1984.

Livingstone, Sonia, et al. "Critical Digital Literacy: Evaluating Media Education and Its Impact." *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-15.

Pew Research Center. "Public Perceptions of Media Bias and Views of News Outlets." *Pew Research Center*, 10 Jan. 2020, www.pewresearch.org. (The Pew Research Center provides data on how political beliefs and education levels influence trust and perceptions of bias in mainstream media).

James G. Webster, Thomas B. Ksiazek, The Dynamics of Audience Fragmentation: Public Attention in an Age of Digital Media, *Journal of Communication*, Volume 62, Issue 1, February 2012, Pages 39–56, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01616.x

Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media*

and Politics. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Yang, Guobin. *The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China*. Columbia University Press, 2016.

Yin, Yiyi, and Anthony Fung. "Youth Online Cultural Participation and Bilibili: An Alternative Form of Democracy in China?." *Digital Media Integration for Participatory Democracy,* edited by Rocci Luppicini and Rachel Baarda, IGI Global, 2017, pp. 130-154. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-2463-2.ch007

China Youth & Children Research Center. "The Ideological Trends of Chinese Youth." *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2021.

Zhuang Chen, Qian He, Zhifei Mao, Hwei-Ming Chung, and Sabita Maharjan. 2019. A study on the characteristics of douyin short videos and implications for edge caching. In Proceedings of the ACM Turing Celebration Conference - China (ACM TURC '19). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 13, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1145/3321408.3323082

Zhou, Wei, et al. "Douyin as an Educational Tool: How Short Videos Promote Knowledge Sharing." *Journal of Educational Technology*, 2020.

Zhao, J., & Zhang, D. (2024). Visual propaganda in Chinese central and local news agencies: a Douyin case study. Humanities And Social Sciences Communications, 11. doi:10.1057/s41599-024-03059-5