**Short video plus social has a new face**

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Tourists are playing and filming Douyin videos at the beach of Shimei Bay in Wanning City, Hainan Province. File photo

The 43rd Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet released by the China Internet Network Information Center shows that as of December 2018, the number of short video users in China reached 648 million, with a user utilization rate of 78.2%, and a user growth rate of 9.1% in the second half of 2018. With its low threshold, fragmentation, and mobility, short videos have a profound and lasting impact on people's way of thinking, lifestyle, and information consumption.

As a new form of online culture, short videos have become the most popular video application and are playing an increasingly important role in social culture. In order to better meet the increasingly diversified needs of users, the "short video + social" model has been continuously reformed and improved in practice, becoming an important force in reshaping the media landscape and public opinion ecology.

**New tools for online interaction**

At the beginning of this year, Toutiao's new social product, Duoshan, was launched; not long ago, WeChat launched the "Video Status" function, which allows users to record and publish short videos... On one hand, short video giants are trying to do social networking, and on the other hand, social giants are crossing over to short videos. Industry insiders analyzed that the integration of short videos and social networking will become a new round of hot spots this year.

According to Analysys data, the total monthly usage time of Chinese mobile Internet users is 13.535 billion hours, a year-on-year increase of 17.9%, and users' stickiness to mobile Internet usage continues to increase. In the time distribution of users, video and social networking still occupy a major position. The "China Mobile Internet 2018 Annual Report" released recently shows that short videos have surpassed online videos to become the second largest industry after instant messaging. Taking December 2018 as an example, Douyin, Kuaishou, Xigua Video, Huoshan Short Video, Haokan Video, and Weishi ranked at the forefront in terms of monthly active users.

Why have short videos become the new favorite in social media? Chen Yi, dean of the Institute of Integrated Media Development at Soochow University, believes that as a cultural form, short videos are more appealing than text and pictures. Psychological research has shown that humans have a "vividness bias" and that visually significant information can easily influence people's judgment. According to iMedia Research, nearly 40% of users are willing to use short videos instead of text to communicate, accounting for 37.3%.

"Short videos and social media have fusion properties." A media practitioner said that on the one hand, short videos contribute a lot of original content and stronger user stickiness to social media; on the other hand, social platforms provide channels for the rapid spread of short videos.

Experts point out that there are roughly five reasons for the rise of short video social platforms: first, they provide convenient and instant operation needs; second, they adapt to people’s fragmented reading habits; third, they meet people’s needs for personalized images; fourth, they are promoted by the development of social media; and fifth, they are a product of national entertainment.

**A breakthrough in content upgrade**

Kantar, a world-renowned research company, once conducted a survey of more than 100,000 social media users. The results showed that users are more inclined to affirm the positive effects of social networking among acquaintances. The most frequently mentioned positive impacts of social media are mainly social networking among acquaintances and knowledge acquisition. More than 60% of the respondents believed that social media "helps me understand social hot spots more quickly" and "increases my knowledge."

The change in the public's attitude towards social media is the result of the generalization of social interaction. In recent years, with the continuous rise and iteration of various social media, the growth rate of users has gradually entered a new normal. Whether it is Douyin's "Traditional Culture" and "Scenic Spots in Poor Counties" or Kuaishou's "Contemporary Hundred Craftsmen Map" and "Kuaishou Classroom", they are all committed to breaking the limitations of "traffic thinking" and returning to content value and individual value. Industry insiders pointed out that the model of allowing short videos to achieve user interaction through knowledge dissemination is being recognized by more and more people. "The impact of short video knowledge dissemination on users is not only at the knowledge level, but also extends to daily life, to the creation of culture, and the creation of living landscapes."

In fact, increasing investment and support for knowledge-based content has become a consensus in the industry. To this end, Haokan Video will set up a 100 million yuan exclusive fund this year to encourage the creation of knowledge-based content and strive to increase the distribution of high-quality videos by 300%; Tencent Penguin will invest 5 billion yuan and 10 billion traffic to cultivate 10,000 high-quality creators. Industry insiders analyzed that this year, knowledge consumption will become more and more a user demand, and the main scenario will also shift from information flow to search. He also revealed that the completion rate of knowledge-based content playback reached 62%, far higher than the 48% of entertainment categories.

Excessive entertainment and vulgarization are definitely not a long-term solution. Some experts suggest that in the future, short video platforms should strengthen cooperation with universities, professional science popularization institutions and scholars to further enhance the coverage and depth of knowledge content, and help improve users' comprehensive quality and vision through social interaction.

**The source of popular culture**

"Here comes my brother", "I bought a Buddha", "Let's have a look", "We are different"... Nowadays, more and more Internet buzzwords originate from short video platforms, and then spread offline to a wider social and cultural space. As the most popular video application at present, short videos play an increasingly important role in social culture.

"In a sense, culture is the lifestyle of ordinary people." Chen Yi believes that every era has a representative form of popular culture, and media forms play an important role in shaping social culture. If the golden age of television in the 1980s and 1990s was the popular culture at the time, then today's short videos are the current popular culture.

With the popularization of mobile Internet and smart terminals, short videos have attracted widespread participation from netizens, especially young netizens, and have also spawned a new form of online culture. Some scholars believe that short videos have evolved from a commercial pursuit of traffic to a daily routine, and then to activating video enthusiasts among the public. The increasing number of diverse subcultures has built contemporary popular culture and even mass culture.

"It is a long process from subculture to mainstream culture, from popular culture to classic culture, and it cannot be achieved overnight." Chen Yi said that there are many hidden concerns and problems under the prosperity of short videos, such as the pursuit of pleasure, humorous entertainment mentality, profit-seeking mentality and excessive pursuit of sensory stimulation. "We need to pay attention to the important role of short video culture in shaping social culture."