

# Your How Short Video Empowers Sexual Minority Groups: A Case Study of the TikTok Platform

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## Abstract:

This study investigates the empowering effects of short video platforms, particularly TikTok, on sexual minority groups within the cyberspace realm. Through a questionnaire survey, we explore the platform's role in enhancing visibility, self-expression, and community building for sexual minorities. Our findings reveal that TikTok, with its expansive reach and interactive features, serves as a potent tool for awareness, understanding, and identity formation among these groups. The platform's algorithmic recommendations and user engagement mechanisms significantly contribute to the dissemination of diverse sexual minority narratives, fostering a broader societal understanding and acceptance. However, challenges such as cyber violence, privacy concerns, and content filtering algorithms necessitate a collaborative approach to harness the full potential of these platforms for empowerment. This research contributes to the discourse on media's role in social change, offering insights for platform policies, content creators, and societal stakeholders to collectively advance the rights and well-being of sexual minorities in a digital age.

**Keywords:** TikTok; LGBTQ+; Empowerment; Cyberspace; Social Media

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

In the digital age, short video platforms such as Douyin have become an important channel for social interaction and information access for young people around the world. These platforms, with their low threshold of creation, rapid dissemination, and powerful algorithm recommendation mechanism, have reshaped the pattern of information dissemination and provided a new stage for different groups to show themselves and exchange ideas. Especially when it comes to the empowerment of sexual minorities, short video platforms show unique value and potential. Sexual minorities, including but not limited to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people, have long faced varying degrees of discrimination and marginalization around the world. They face unfair treatment in many fields such as education, employment and health care, and their social participation and quality of life are seriously affected. Although many countries and regions have made improvements at the legal level, there are still large differences in social awareness and cultural acceptance. In this context, the emergence of short video platforms offers a new avenue of empowerment for sexual minorities. First, the popularity and convenience of these

platforms enable sexual minorities to share their living conditions, emotional experiences and rights and interests at a lower cost and higher efficiency, thereby increasing their visibility and social influence. Secondly, the social nature and interaction mechanism of short video platforms provide a social space for sexual minorities to support and communicate with each other, which helps to enhance their sense of belonging and solidarity. However, the role of short video platforms in empowering sexual minorities is not without controversy. On the one hand, the algorithm recommendation system may aggravate the information cocoon effect to a certain extent, limiting the dissemination scope and diversity of minority content. On the other hand, issues such as cyber violence and privacy disclosure have also brought new risks and challenges to sexual minorities. In addition, differences in regulatory policies and cultural environments for short video content in different countries and regions may also affect the empowerment of sexual minorities on these platforms.

Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth how short video platforms, especially Douyin, empower sexual minorities, and analyze their empowerment mechanisms, influencing factors, and potential problems. The research will be carried out from the following aspects: First, the ways of expression and interaction of sexual minorities on short video platforms, including content creation,

community building and user interaction; Second, how the technology and operational mechanisms of short video platforms, such as algorithm recommendations, content review and user feedback, affect the empowerment process of sexual minorities; Third, the impact of social and cultural environment, policies and regulations on the empowerment of sexual minorities by short video platforms, including the difference analysis in different countries and regions; The fourth is the potential risks and challenges of empowering sexual minorities on short video platforms, as well as strategies and suggestions for dealing with them.

Through this study, we hope to provide more comprehensive and in-depth theoretical support and practical guidance for the empowerment of sexual minorities, promote social understanding and acceptance of sexual minorities, and promote the construction of a more inclusive, equal and diverse social environment. At the same time, this study will also provide references for operators and policy makers of short video platforms to help them better understand and utilize the potential and value of short video platforms in empowering sexual minorities, and jointly promote social progress and harmonious development.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore in depth how short-form video platforms, particularly Douyin, are providing empowerment opportunities for sexual minorities as an emerging media tool. Explore how the Tiktok platform empowers sexual minorities, and analyze how its interactivity and communication power promote self-expression and community building. Through the questionnaire survey method to assess people's views on sexual minorities, better help sexual minorities to improve social identity. Proposed more effective use of Tiktok platform for the rights and support of sexual minorities. In the context of globalization and digitalization, short video platforms, with their unique communication characteristics, create a space for sexual minorities to show themselves, share stories, exchange experiences, obtain information and support each other. The main objective of the study was to analyze and understand how these platforms can help members of sexual minorities build a positive self-identity, enhance a sense of community belonging, and increase their visibility and influence in society. In addition, this study also aims to assess the role of short video platforms in promoting social awareness and acceptance of sexual minorities, and explore how sexual minorities use these platforms for self-advocacy and rights advocacy. The study will focus on the platform's algorithmic recommendation system, user interaction patterns, and features of content creation and sharing, and examine how these factors work together in the empowerment process of sexual minorities. At the

same time, this study will also focus on the risks and challenges that short video platforms can bring, such as cyber violence, privacy breaches and information filtering, and how sexual minorities can address these issues to ensure that they can enjoy empowerment opportunities while maintaining their own safety and rights. Finally, this study hopes to provide valuable insights and recommendations for sexual minorities, short video platform operators, policy makers, and the general public to promote a more inclusive, equal, and diverse social environment. Through the case analysis of Tiktok platform, this study is expected to provide an empirical basis for understanding the role of new media technology in the process of empowerment, and provide strategic guidance for the rights protection and social integration of sexual minorities.

## 1.3 Significance of the Research

Through this study, we explore how short video platforms such as Douyin empower sexual minorities, an emerging field of research that contributes to understanding social change in the context of new media. Analyzing how the interactivity and communication power of the Douyin platform provides opportunities for sexual minorities to express themselves is of great significance for understanding social movements in cyberspace. Studying the ways in which sexual minorities share their personal stories and increase their social visibility through Tiktok can help promote public understanding and support for this group. Through the form of questionnaire survey, the actual effect of Douyin in improving the social status and rights and interests of sexual minorities is evaluated, which can provide a basis for relevant policy formulation and platform optimization. Discuss the challenges faced by short video platforms and strategies to provide theoretical and practical guidance for sexual minorities to fight for more rights and support. To sum up, this study not only contributes to an in-depth understanding of the changes in the social status and rights of sexual minorities in the new media environment, but also has important practical significance for promoting social inclusion and diversity.

## 1.4 Research Structure and Framework

This article first discusses whether the videos posted by sexual minorities on Douyin improve their visibility through the platform. Through the results of the questionnaire, it was summarized whether the people who viewed the videos of sexual minorities would understand (do not understand) the videos posted by sexual minorities, and how much they viewed the videos of sexual minorities. We are discussing how to popularize knowledge about sexual minorities through the Tiktok platform, and enhance people's inclusiveness, understanding and respect

for sexual minorities. Finally, it analyzes whether people's inclusiveness, understanding and respect for minorities are enhanced through the platform, and whether sexual minorities can express themselves more freely.

## 2. Literature Review

During the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, sexual minority athletes presented a rich and diverse image on Chinese and American social media. Gay athletes are portrayed as skilled, elite Olympic champions, leaders and representatives of the sexual minority community. Transgender athletes are seen as history-makers and controversial figures who may use their physical advantages to influence women's sports[1]. Sexual minorities face social pressure and discrimination, but short video platforms provide a space to show multiple gender roles and sexual orientations. They can show behaviors and expressions different from traditional gender roles, which helps to alleviate gender role conflicts and improve social awareness and acceptance of sexual minorities. At the same time, through positive self-expression and community support, members of sexual minorities can reduce their internalized homophobic aversion and enhance their self-identity[2]. Sexual minorities may experience social anxiety as a result of perceived discrimination. Short video platforms provide them with a low-pressure social environment, which helps to reduce social anxiety and improve mental health [3]. The construction of the rights and interests protection system of sexual minorities can be used as a tool to promote the reform of social concepts and the legislative process of rights and interests protection through short video platforms, and improve the visibility and social influence of sexual minorities[4]. From the perspective of discourse discipline, Hu Huan analyzed the reports of sexual minorities in mainstream media. It is also known that short video platforms provide a decentralized channel for sexual minorities to better express themselves and resist the discipline and stigmatization of the mainstream media[5]. Zhang's research focuses on the self-presentation of young sexual minority women in China on social media. The study found that while social media provides a platform for expression and empowerment for sexual minorities, there is also a gay norm that sets standards in terms of appearance, education, economics, intimacy, etc., leading to hierarchical divisions within the community. And her research points out that new media empowerment is not without cost, it comes with norms and expectations for sexual minorities. This norm may lead to some sexual minority women with more masculine gender temperament being criticized and excluded within the group. Sexual minorities on social media often need to negotiate and

dialogue with these norms when presenting themselves, and some choose to reject identity labels, while others actively exclude themselves from the norms through self-deprecation and other ways[6].

To sum up, short video platforms such as Douyin play an important role in empowering sexual minorities, not only providing a space for self-expression and socialization, but also helping to promote the progress of social concepts and the realization of rights and interests protection. However, it also requires platform operators, content creators and society at large to take a shared responsibility to ensure that sexual minorities can live and thrive in a more inclusive and equal environment.

## 3. Research Methods

Questionnaire survey is a commonly used social science research method. Questionnaires are designed and distributed to target groups to collect their views, attitudes, behaviors and other information on a certain problem or phenomenon. The questionnaire survey method provides a systematic and comprehensive method for studying the empowerment of sexual minorities by short video, which helps to reveal the multidimensional influence and potential mechanism of this phenomenon. Through this approach, researchers can better understand the potential and challenges of short video platforms in promoting the empowerment of sexual minorities, providing support for building a more inclusive and equal digital space. Taking Tiktok platform as the research platform, Tiktok is a popular short video platform in China and around the world, with a huge user base and high engagement. The interactive nature of the Tiktok platform allows users to participate in the dissemination of content by means of likes, comments and sharing, which provides opportunities for sexual minorities to express and communicate. Tiktok's algorithmic recommendation system is able to quickly disseminate content to interested user groups, increasing the visibility of sexual minorities' content. Through the content related to sexual minorities on the Douyin platform published by Juanxing, the empowerment role of sexual minorities related content on the Douyin platform was studied, and profound insights were obtained from the collected data. A total of 63 valid questionnaires were collected, covering respondents of different ages and genders, ensuring the diversity and representation of the findings. The questionnaire survey provides a window into the empowerment of sexual minorities on the Douyin platform. By analyzing the respondents' responses, it can be concluded that the Tiktok platform has played a positive role in increasing the visibility of sexual minorities and promoting social understanding and acceptance. However,

there are challenges, such as how to further increase public understanding and acceptance, and how to strengthen the organization and interaction of sexual minorities on the platform. Future research can build on this to further explore the empowerment mechanisms of sexual minorities on short video platforms and how to optimize the platform environment to better support the rights and interests of sexual minorities.

### 3.1 Data Collection

In this study, questionnaire survey was used to collect data to explore “How short videos empower sexual minorities -- taking Tiktok Platform as an example” as the research theme. The questionnaire design process has been carefully planned to ensure that the required information can be collected efficiently and accurately. The questionnaire consists of three main parts: introduction, body and conclusion. In the introduction section, a brief introduction to the background and purpose of the study is given, emphasizing the importance of the study, and ensuring that participants understand that their participation is voluntary and that the information they provide will be treated confidentially. The main body is the core of the questionnaire and contains multiple questions designed to gather detailed information about the representation of sexual minorities on the platform and users’ reactions to such content. Closed questions (such as single choice questions) and open questions (such as short answer questions) were designed to adapt to different information collection needs. Each question has been carefully scrutinized to ensure clarity and pertinence. Closed-end questions are designed to reduce the thinking burden of respondents, while improving data consistency and comparability. Prior to the formal issuance of the questionnaire, the study conducted a pre-test to assess the comprehensibility and validity of the questionnaire. The participants in the pre-test were from a population similar to the target sample, and their feedback helped the study identify and resolve possible problems such as ambiguities, difficult to understand questions, or excessively long questionnaires. For example, in question 1, the study asked participants how often they had seen content related to sexual minorities on the Douyin platform in the last six months, with options ranging from several times per day to none. The results showed that most participants saw such content occasionally, but a certain percentage of participants said they never saw it. In questions 2 and 3, the study further asked participants whether they would brush up on and watch these videos, and how often they watched them, in order to understand the prevalence of sexual minority content and user exposure. In questions 4 and 5, the study explored the effects of watching these videos on partic-

ipants’ emotions and attitudes. The study used a Likert scale to assess participants’ emotional responses, ranging from feeling disgusted to feeling relieved, and whether the videos changed their perceptions of sexual minorities. The results showed that many participants were open to these videos and gained understanding and awareness from them. In questions 6 and 7, the study looked at whether participants were willing to share stories or experiences of sexual minorities, and whether they believed that the visibility of sexual minorities on Tiktok contributed to greater social recognition and acceptance of them. These data provided the study with important insights into social attitudes and acceptance. In the concluding section, the study thanked participants for their participation and provided contact information for follow-up questions or feedback. In addition, the study designed a series of interview guidance questions to gather deeper information and encourage participants to discuss their experiences and perspectives in depth. Questionnaires were distributed via email and online survey platforms to increase response rates and facilitate electronic data collection. In designing the questionnaire and interview guidance questions, the study followed strict ethical guidelines to ensure that all participants were adequately informed and signed informed consent prior to participation. Through this questionnaire design data collection tool, the study expects to collect high-quality data and provide a solid foundation for research. Combined with the data collected, The study provides an in-depth analysis of the empowerment of sexual minorities on Tiktok, and explores how short videos can be used as an empowerment tool to improve the visibility of sexual minorities and promote social understanding and acceptance.

### 3.2 Data Analysis and Results

Through a carefully designed questionnaire survey, this study provides an in-depth analysis of how short videos empower sexual minorities on the Douyin platform. The results of the data analysis showed that in the last six months, most participants occasionally saw sexual minorities related content on the platform, indicating that such content has gained some visibility. Participants differed on how often they watched the videos, but nearly half said they were willing to share stories or experiences of sexual minorities, reflecting the growing acceptance of sexual minorities in society. In terms of emotional responses, participants’ feelings ranged from disgust and fear to joy, worry and relief. This diversity reminds us that the emotional impact of LGBTI videos on viewers is complex and multifaceted. Notably, more than half of the participants felt that watching these videos gave them a deeper understanding of sexual minorities, suggesting that short videos

play a positive role in promoting social awareness and inclusion. In terms of the impact of the visibility of sexual minorities on Tiktok on social identity and acceptance, most participants believe that it is conducive to improving social identity and acceptance of sexual minorities, but some participants believe that the effect is limited. In addition, respondents were divided on whether sexual minorities formed specific organizations on Tiktok, which may require further research to explore. The gender and age distribution shows that the majority of respondents are female, and the ages are mainly between 16 and 24 years old, which may reflect the basic demographic characteristics of Douyin users, as well as the younger generation's focus on sexual minority issues. In summary, the questionnaire method provides us with a comprehensive window into the empowerment of sexual minorities on the Douyin platform. By analyzing respondents' responses, we can conclude that the Tiktok platform has played a positive role in increasing the visibility of sexual minorities and promoting social understanding and acceptance. However, there are challenges, such as how to further increase public understanding and acceptance, and how to strengthen the organization and interaction of sexual minorities on the platform. Future research can build on this to further explore the empowerment mechanisms of sexual minorities on short video platforms and how to optimize the platform environment to better support the rights and interests of sexual minorities.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Empowerment Pathway: Awareness

Short video platforms, with their speed, intuition and ease of sharing, offer sexual minorities a new channel to learn about themselves and others. These platforms break down traditional media barriers and enable sexual minorities to share their stories and experiences at a lower cost and with greater reach. Through short videos, members of sexual minorities can find empathy, support and understanding more quickly, while also increasing public awareness and acceptance of sexual minorities. The study found that the significance of short video platforms for the empowerment of sexual minorities is multifaceted, providing a platform for self-expression and identity, and helping members of sexual minorities build confidence and a sense of self-worth. Through education and advocacy, short video platforms have been effective in increasing public understanding and acceptance of sexual minorities and reducing discrimination and prejudice, including a basic understanding of their identity and needs. The community function of the short video platform provides a space for sexual minorities to support and communicate with each other,

and enhances the cohesion of the group. Through algorithmic recommendation systems, short-form video platforms enable sexual minorities to create and share their own life clips, emotional stories and advocacy, thereby increasing their visibility in the public eye. Both members of sexual minorities and the wider audience can gain knowledge by watching these short videos to enhance understanding and awareness of sexual minorities, while also helping members of sexual minorities better understand their identity and rights. The social nature of short video platforms enables members of sexual minorities to find each other, connect, and form communities, providing them with a platform to support and communicate with each other. In addition, sexual minorities can use short video platforms for social advocacy to promote public awareness and support for the rights of sexual minorities by sharing personal experiences and challenges. Finally, short video platforms provide a space for sexual minorities to express their feelings and experiences, helping them to gain emotional support and identity, and enhance their self-worth and self-esteem. In summary, by providing visibility, education, community connection, advocacy and emotional support, short video platforms have opened up new avenues for the empowerment of sexual minorities, promoting their awareness, understanding and self-identity, and positively contributing to the development of diversity and inclusion in society.

### 4.2 Empowerment Pathway: Understanding

Understanding the diversity and complexity of sexual minorities is critical to the empowerment process. Sexual minorities include many different sexual orientations and gender identities, including LGBTQ+, and they face different challenges and needs. Short video platforms, especially Douyin, provide a diverse window of opportunity for sexual minorities to be more widely known and recognized. Members of sexual minorities post short videos to share personal experiences of coming out, love stories, daily life, etc. These stories not only increase society's understanding of sexual minorities, but also provide a way for them to express themselves. Some short videos focused on education and advocacy for sexual minorities on issues such as gender equality and anti-discrimination, which helped to increase public awareness and understanding. The study reveals how short videos can enhance users' deeper understanding of sexual minorities, including their life experiences, emotional experiences and contributions to society. It was also found that LGBT-short videos promote emotional empathy and cognitive understanding with users by telling personal stories and sharing experiences.

### 4.3 Empowerment Pathway: Identification

A sense of identity is an important part of the empowerment process for sexual minorities. It is not only related to the acceptance and affirmation of the individual's own identity, but also the basis of social acceptance and respect. The establishment of a sense of identity helps members of sexual minorities overcome inherent prejudice and discrimination and enhance their sense of self-worth and social belonging. Research shows that short videos play an important role in promoting public identification with sexual minorities, which is manifested in support and acceptance of sexual minorities. Building and strengthening a sense of identity is a key step in the empowerment process. Short video platforms help members of sexual minorities form and strengthen their self-identity by providing a space for personal expression, educational information, and community support. This increased sense of identity translates into practical effects of empowerment, such as increased social visibility and enhanced self-advocacy, ultimately contributing to social change and the full empowerment of sexual minorities. However, this process also requires the joint efforts of platforms, society, and members of sexual minorities to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of empowerment.

## 5. Conclusion

As a form of new media, short video has played a significant role in empowering sexual minorities, especially Douyin, which has become an important tool for empowerment of sexual minorities, and its influence and role have been fully reflected in this study. Through questionnaire survey and data analysis, the study reached the following conclusions: First, the wide coverage and high participation of Douyin platform provides an unprecedented space for sexual minorities to display and communicate, and through the space provided, helps sexual minorities to improve social visibility and public awareness. This high visibility helps to break down social prejudices and promote public understanding and acceptance of sexual minorities. The ease of transmission and consumability of short videos allows stories and messages from sexual minorities to spread quickly and reach a wider audience. This rapid flow of information helps members of sexual minorities gain support and acceptance, while also providing the public with opportunities for learning and reflection. The interactive nature of the platform, such as comments, likes, and shares, not only enhances the sense of community among members of sexual minorities, but also provides a channel for the public to engage in discussion and express support. This social interaction is an integral part of the empowerment process. In addition, this study

shows that the content shared by sexual minorities through short video platforms changes public attitudes and perceptions to some extent. Many participants said that watching the videos gave them a deeper understanding of sexual minorities, and that this change in perception was key to the empowerment process. However, the study also points out some challenges and limitations. While short video platforms offer empowerment opportunities for sexual minorities, issues such as information filtering, cyberbullying, and privacy breaches remain. These issues require platforms, society, and members of LGBTQ to work together to ensure healthy and effective empowerment processes, strengthen platform regulation, improve content quality, encourage positive communication, and support LGBTQ content creators. Finally, this study highlights the potential of short video platforms in the empowerment of sexual minorities, while also calling on all sectors of society to protect and support the rights and interests of sexual minorities. By optimizing platform policies, strengthening laws and regulations, and improving public education, we can further promote the full empowerment and social integration of sexual minorities. The results support the hypothesis that Douyin short videos empower sexual minorities through three stages of knowledge, understanding and identification. These three stages represent the process of consciousness raising, cognitive deepening and emotional identification respectively.

To sum up, short video platforms such as Douyin play an important role in empowering sexual minorities, not only providing a space for self-expression and socialization, but also helping to promote the progress of social concepts and the realization of rights and interests protection, but their full potential needs support and efforts from many aspects. Through ongoing research and practice, the study can better understand how short videos can empower sexual minorities and contribute to building a more inclusive and equal society. However, it also requires platform operators, content creators and society at large to take a shared responsibility to ensure that sexual minorities can live and thrive in a more inclusive and equal environment. The potential of short video to drive social change and promote diversity and inclusion, and how all sectors of society can use these tools to support the rights and well-being of sexual minorities.

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