A discussion on the current phenomenon of short video obsession of all ages

Jingcheng Guo[1, *]**, Yiliao Luo**[1]

[1]Wuhan Britain-China School, Wuhan, China

*Corresponding author: jingchengguo03@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article investigates the underlying reasons for the current phenomenon of short video obsession through a sampling survey and reviewing previous related studies - the social competition among teenagers, the recommendation mechanism of video applications, and the increase in the number of empty nesters. At the same time, the discussion will be extended to the positive and negative impacts of the development of the short video industry on three different age groups, including the academic performance of teenagers, the labor productivity of middle-aged people, and the emotional value of the elderly, further discussing the social environment formed due to the entire short video industry. Finally, the corresponding social impacts were listed and elaborated. In essence, short video has emerged as a practical medium for the rapid dissemination of video information in light of the recent proliferation of the Internet. Individuals across different age groups are driven by distinct motivations to engage with and even immerse themselves in short video applications, owing to their respective life stages.

Keywords: Short video; social competition; big data recommendation mechanism empty nesters.

1. Introduction

Short video is a kind of online video of short duration shared out through the Internet, which is widely favoured by people due to its relatively short duration compared to films, simplified content, and superficial information provided in a few seconds as its highlight. As of December 2023, the total number of short videos applications users locating in China was up to 1 billion [1]. With the continuously deepening development of globalization, the Internet has become by far more popular than it was in the past, accelerating the speed and mode of information transmission and making it faster and more convenient. Due to this fact, the development of the Internet has also provided a platform and technical support for short videos. At the same time, it is undeniable that people nowadays are becoming more and more addicted to short videos in their daily lives. In the outdoors, for example, it is common that there are people, with their heads bowing, watching short videos as entertainment at every street corner. Sometimes this even can have a negative impact on normal studies and daily work.

The focus of this paper is on the reasons and related reality of the existing obsession with short videos across varied age groups through a sampling research approach that are primarily associated to social structure rather than technology.

2. Review of previous studies

In fact, at present, there is a little research on this topic, and the research programs mainly focus on users' preferences for short videos platforms. For example, the authors can analyze the established facts of each cause that leads to short video addiction, which helps to discuss the relevant impacts through social research reports on the this topic. They can also implement a relatively detailed age-stratification approach to the survey method, including social media as a variable, and initiate questionnaires with the same content. For example, the authors can more accurately analyze the established facts that contribute to each cause of short video obsession and discuss the related effects through the social research reports on the causes of short video addiction. They can also implement a relatively detailed age-stratification approach to the survey method, including social media as a variable, and initiate questionnaires with the same content.

In terms of this topic, since there is few previous study support, the lack of the database is not complete enough for the authors' specific research, therefore all the experimental data and most of the analysis need to be independently obtained through the research methods set by the authors.

3. Methodologies

In this section, in response to the reasons and corresponding facts behind the current phenomenon of short video obsession, the authors introduce a survey technique for various age groups related to this issue.

3.1 Hypothesis about the reasons

The reasons for obsession with short videos are different for varied ages. The authors made a hypothesis toward each of the age groups. In terms of younger generation, they are likely to drown in short videos due to large amount of leisure time with seeming gradual easing of social competition; for middle-aged people, on the other hand, the main cause might be the attraction of the

contents in the short videos as this generation prefer to get access to new born technologies. However, the baby boomers may enjoy short videos because of their lack of the companionship of their children.

3.2 Testing the hypothesis

In order to maintain the precision of the research, the authors selected the most popular social media platforms for each age groups and conducted a sample survey on the reasons for obsessions to short videos: a free questionnaire, without specific options, was set up on Instagram for users between the ages of 18 and 34, while two other with exactly the same content as were posted on Facebook, facing to people between 35 and 55 year-old and people older than 55 years old separately [2]. The questionnaires, nevertheless, allowed users to enter their age optionally; this ensures the flexibility of the investigation. All the probable causes of infatuation of short videos can be easily classified by establishing three main factors: boredom (motivation comes from massive spare time), loneliness (one is lack of company), and interest of content (one's attention is caught by the information provided by short videos). Considering of efficiency, accuracy, and validity of the research, each of the questionnaires is uniquely set to a maximum of 450 responses (then keep 400 of the most effective answers), and each of these responses is briefly attributed into one of these three typical groups and quantified into a figure of percentage to be in favor of the overall analysis. For example, terms similar to "families are not by one's side", "there are too few friends for one to hang out with" belong to "loneliness", a unique, defined group.

On top of this, as we conclude three main considerable terms from a large amount of experimental result, a bar chart can be generated to represent the processed data, leading to the evaluation being more straight forward. Then, according to the graph, the hypotheses proposed are verified, and the causation of the outcomes is discussed with the mention of further impacts on the society.

4. Results

Over a long period of time, each of the three questionnaires collected 400 valid responses that could be sorted into the three major terms. In this section, the responses received during the sampling survey are first intergrated then organised into visible chart (as shown in TABLE 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Three Age Groups

Term	18-34	34-55	>55
Boredom	113	95	99
Loneliness	15	116	192
Interest of content	272	189	109

4. 1. Disposal of data

Obviously, the data presented in Table 1 do not provide an intuitive comparison. The data used to represent quantities needs to be organized into proportional forms, so that the relationships between the part and the whole are highlighted. We directly divide each of the quantities by 400 and obtain the percentage values, then transfer these values into a standard bar chart (as shown in Figure 1).
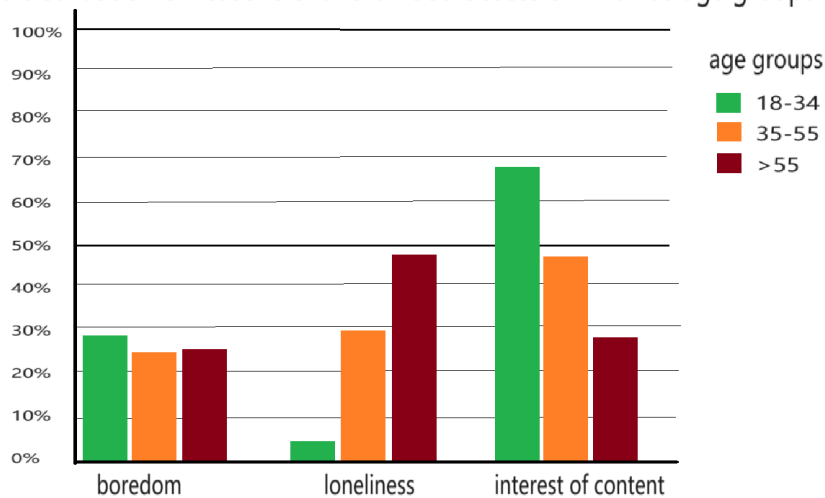

Figure 1. The distribution of reasons of short video obsession in three groups

According to Figure 1, it is not difficult to see that, as the authors hypothesized, middle-aged people's preference for short video content exceeds their addiction to leisure time and loneliness. And, as anticipated by the authors, the main reason for indulgence among users over 55 years old is loneliness, while their addiction to the content of short videos is a relatively smaller factor. It is noticeable that in the case of users both in between the age 35 and 55 and over 55 years old, the maximum disparity between the data does not exceed than one-quarter. In contrast, the interest in the information conveyed by short videos among young users demonstrates a strikingly high factor of 68%, by far surpassing the other two data. This is the only exception to the authors' initial hypothesis.

4.2 Explanations for these results

Some of the results turn out to be different from the authors' hypothesis. Each of these results, however, can be explained by the actuality of social competition, the work of Big Data mechanism, and current circumstance of empty nesters.

The popularity of short videos among teenagers is fueled by "scrolling". The results of previous survey shows that more than 80% of the young people surveyed "often" (42.70%) or "sometimes" (38.69%) felt pressure in their professional, academic and personal lives, while less than 20% felt pressure from competition "rarely" (15.23%) or "not" (2.98%) [3]. Pressure from competitors made them choose "often" (42.70 percent) or "sometimes" (38.69 percent) [3].

With the increasing academic pressure, teenagers' private time has become relatively disunited, and spending time on their hobbies seems to be out of reach for teenagers nowadays, compared to traditional recreational activities such as sports and outdoor trips. In this environment, browsing short videos seems to be the most suitable way of leisure. With just the touch of a finger, one can easily watch relevant videos about his/her field of interest and

learn about new current affairs in the world. With the touch of a finger, it's easy to watch videos about your field of interest and keep up with current events around the world. So it makes sense that the "heads-down crowd" has emerged, with breaks between classes and waiting at the train station as opportunities to browse through short videos, and this consequently leaded to that leisure time (boredom) takes up a minor proportion of data in terms of the age between 18 and 34 year-old.

Following by, based on relevant research, there have been many investigations into various aspects of short videos, such as its video characteristics, trends, content value, and social impacts. In terms of video recommendation algorithms for short videos, taking TikTok as an example, its video recommendation mechanism is from the massive short videos, directly selecting the topics and content that users are interested in and recommending them to users, matching users' needs with personalised content [4]. Further elaboration refers to Information Cocoons, a concept introduced by American scholar Cass R. Sunstein in 2006. This idea suggests that when people are in the information age, they tend to pay attention to and consume only the information that interests them and fits in with their own perceptions [5]. Various types of short videos is to seize the user this psychology, through big data push, directly to the various users interested in the content of the recommendation and then the next browse the video list, so as to attract users, thus making the user in the short video s software to stay for a longer period of time. This primarily contributed to the figure of the middle-aged group.

Finally, short videos fill the loneliness of empty nesters. Along with the ageing of the population, the number of elderly empty-nest families in China is also on the rise [6]. The so-called empty-nest households are those in which children have separated from their parents' families after they have reached adulthood, leaving the elderly to live alone; according to the 2010 bulletin of the main data from the first six national 1 per cent population surveys, China's population of people aged 60 years and over was 178 million, or 13.26 per cent of the total population, and the country's society has entered an accelerated period of population ageing [6]. According to the "Tracking Survey on the Situation of China's Urban Data and Rural Population" released by the Office of the National Working Committee on the Elderly, empty-nest households in urban areas accounted for 49.7 per cent of the total population in 2006 [6].

Undoubtedly, empty nesters are destined to have a stronger sense of loneliness than ordinary elder people, with no target to communicate with in order to dilute their depression. Without the company of their children or relatives, they cannot live with the basic enthusiasm they used to

have. Due to the lack of companionship of their children, they feel unreliable and are seemingly completely out of touch with the whole society, and mental illnesses are likely to ensue as consequences. In this regard, the emergence of short videos has brought them some positive emotional impacts. For instance, these old people are able to overcome their loneliness with humorous video clips, which can provide them with comfort. At the same time, short videos provide a vast platform for communication and interaction, allowing these elderly people to meet thousands of netizens online, and their sense of loneliness will certainly be reduced while communicating with each other. This fact sufficiently explains the distribution of data of factors in groups of people older than 55 year-old.

5. Corresponding influences

In this section, some influences related to the reasons behind the phenomenon of the indulgence in short videos are identified and discussed by each afterwards.

Today, teenagers' long-term use of short videos has mixed effects on them. On the one hand, adolescents thus have ready access to vast amounts of knowledge that contribute to their better academic performance. While watching science videos on specific subjects, they are able to gain critical and practical knowledge in just a few minutes. This provides them with great convenience in their essay writing, thesis reply and daily learning tasks. On the other hand, this also brings unavoidable troubles in their daily lives. The number of young people, who start to depend on short videos not only in their leisure times but also in their normal studies, shows a trend of continuous increase. In the condition that the Big Data mechanism ceaselessly operates on short videos platforms, it is more difficult to let their unique insights to be nurtured. Furthermore, this may even cause a delay in the progress of social development.

For middle-aged users, the emergence of short videos has provided them with a huge library of information that is beneficial to their daily work. It is easier for them to find targeted work plans through professionally-targeted information than before. Consequently, their work efficiency, business performance, and decision-making skills have been improved, resulting in successful achievements in each of their fields. Take education industry as an example, short videos can act as a substitute for other traditional teaching method due to its detailed introduction of specific key points in relatively shorter duration. Nevertheless, there does exist cases that people with jobs neglect their duties with the overuse of short videos apps since short videos offered equal entertainment function. To avoid such problems, strict management of their work-

ing period and their break time is certainly necessary.

For the aged users of short videos applications, considering of the situation that a large amount of short videos watchers of them are retired from their previous duties, these applications mostly brings benefits to the elder people. Not only they compensate for the depression caused by the probable absence of children, but also they can be installed to record and share old age life among relatives and friends. The above shows that the emotional value provided by short videos to the elderly occupies almost all the impacts in this term.

6. Summary and outlook

In this paper, the authors first put forward three hypotheses about the reasons why people of different ages are addicted to short videos, and then put three sample questionnaires on different social media platforms according to the specific usage of users. Finally, by moving the collected responses onto a bar chart in a percentage pattern, the authors draw conclusions that confirm to the hypothesis and do not conform to the hypothesis: users between 18 and 34 years old are addicted mainly to the attractiveness of the content, while people older than 34 years old and younger than 56 years old are more likely to be immersed in short video apps due to the abundance of time. Finally, the main motivation for older users to indulge in short videos is the lack of company from others.

Subsequently, the corresponding causes of the factors, which contributed to the phenomenon, are discovered, and their associated effects are identified then discussed. The recent tough social competition, the Big Data recommendation mechanism, and constant increment of the number of empty nesters count as the major cause of obsession with short videos in the discussed age groups respectively,

and they are possible to result in a few serious problems such as employees' laxity at work.

In essence, short video has emerged as a practical medium for the rapid dissemination of video information in light of the recent proliferation of the Internet. Individuals across different age groups are driven by distinct motivations to engage with and even immerse themselves in short video applications, owing to their respective life stages. It is imperative for individuals to acknowledge this technological innovation by delving into its underlying rationales rooted in age and society. Moving forward, this societal issue will be subject to more extensive discourse within academic circles, while people's utilization of these platforms will undergo significant transformation.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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