

New Media for Cross-Cultural Communication: Tiktok's Cultural Dissemination and Challenges in the Global Market

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Abstract. TikTok's global expansion momentum is strong, with its e-commerce business TikTok Shop performing particularly well in Southeast Asia and the United States, with an expected GMV of \$50 billion by 2024. This paper takes Tiktok as the research background to study the success and future challenges of Tiktok, which leads to some defects of the Internet and the characteristics of social media. For example, the loss of privacy due to the development of the Internet, the imperfect protection of minors, and the uncontrollable political conflicts that will be faced across borders. This article includes the origin of Tiktok - a new Media's entry into the Internet market. Success - a new "short video" model, which immerses people. Challenges-some privacy controls, uncontrollable contradictions, and public opinions. Prospects mentioned above - innovative equipment to spread benefits to society. The article also concluded that the Internet has some problems due to its propagation speed and big data, and provided solutions such as continuous innovation.

Keywords: Innovation social media; New media; TikTok.

1. Introduction

With the development of social media, TikTok as a new platform provided in recent years has its own way of attracting audiences and making it stronger. Since social media has a huge impact on human beings, there are some professional concepts that make the system more efficient, which contributed to the success of TikTok. As favorable evidence in the development history of the Internet, TikTok's high download rate and transmission rate prove its success in creation. TikTok was founded in 2016 by a Chinese company called ByteDance, which pioneered the use of "short videos". Its video format and content have attracted many users, especially the new generation. In 2021, TikTok's active users exceeded one billion people, and this huge usage rate also led TikTok to go global. While facing the world, TikTok also faces many challenges. Because the market system and user preferences in each country are completely different, this is often caused by cultural differences, international situations, and competition between platforms. So they must gather more data and come up with more methods to cater to different users.

As mentioned earlier, because of the progress of the Internet, people began to use electronic equipment and software frequently. TikTok is the latest evolution of social media. Author Guarda and others explore this application by using themselves and collecting data, observing audiences to see the strategy of TikTok's marketing. They found that Its success is due to the creativity and expressive ability of the application. It not only allows you to upload your own videos and edit them with various themes but also potentially creates collaborations with other users [1]. The success of TikTok has a large part of the reason comes from its income. Which means people are willing to consume in this application. Author Abbasi and others did an experiment on how consumers react during the time on the platform if it persuades them to purchase. They use a method called the partial least squares-structural equation modeling to analyze 258 TikTok app users and finally solve that people are willing to purchase in this app to some extent and it really brings continent to us [2]. Since TikTok's data chain is so comprehensive, people may question the harm brought by big data push to people. Author Rutherford and others did research on the young generation's reaction toward e-cigarette spreading and promoting on TikTok. They used Hashtag-based keywords to collect the most viewed publicly available e-cigarette-related videos on TikTok (N = 802) from inception to

November 2020 to form a baseline. The outcome was the majority of vaping-related hashtags were removed by TikTok after the Congressional Hearing after 12 months, which is not very fast so it brought a potential issue to TikTok about the discharge propagation [3]. There is other evidence to suggest that. Bend and others investigated whether a sponsorship disclosure in a TikTok influencer video with different levels of product-plot integration increases adolescents' persuasion knowledge and impacts their brand outcomes. They used 245 Dutch adolescents with a mean age of 13.6 (SD = 1.42) and let them watch a TikTok video in which the brand Doritos was shown passively or integrated into the storyline, with or without a disclosure. The outcome was the brand attitude and product choice were not affected significantly by the disclosure. This indicates TikTok has good regulation toward these ads [4]. In addition to TikTok's own marketing strategy, it also seems to be looking for opportunities to collaborate with large e-commerce platforms such as JD.com and Taobao. Liu and others tried to study the collaboration rate of each platform, they developed stylized models to explore the impacts of the market power of an SSP and the precision marketing of a CRP on platform cooperation. They realized that as the commission rate increases, precision marketing reduces the willingness of supply chain members to implement platform cooperation [5]. This alludes that the success of TikTok did not rely on other platforms at all. Bargoni investigates the relationship between TikTok and e-commerce. Which is to test the moderating role of consumers' emotional attachment to the influencer and the mediating role of brand engagement in affecting purchase intention. They leverage two quantitative studies (n1=248; n3=247) and a qualitative one. The result showed that the lower consumers perceive the gap between the brand personality and self-image, the more they are inclined to engage with and purchase a brand. TikTok will also use this to decide the settlement of e-commerce, so as to obtain revenue [6]. According to the background, TikTok also faces some challenges. One of the challenges is the geopolitical factor. Author Gray did an investigation on the geopolitical implications of TikTok. He provides a content analysis of government and company sources, issued between April and August 2020, to systematically establish the geopolitics of the TikTok controversy. He found that there are still many potential influences that can change people's views on politics and even deepen stereotypes [7]. From these studies, it can be seen that TikTok's handling methods are relatively sophisticated in most cases. However, there are still some uncontrollable factors that need to be strengthened.

The research goal of this paper is to comprehensively explore the development history of TikTok, analyze the key factors of its success, and look forward to the future development direction. Specifically, this paper will examine how TikTok attracts users through short videos and powerful algorithm recommendations, and how to use user-generated content and social interaction to enhance platform activity. In addition, it will also explore how its commercialization strategy can promote brand cooperation and market expansion. Through an analysis of these aspects, the purpose is to reveal the unique advantages of TikTok in the highly competitive social media field and discuss the challenges and opportunities it may face in the future, so as to provide insights into the development of emerging social platforms.

2. Development History

2.1. Dormant Period

TikTok was officially launched in September 2016, initially in the form of short videos. Until April 2017, this period could be considered an "experience server". This is the period when users can experience feedback. TikTok improves the image quality and user experience of videos by adding special effects, filters, stickers, and other functions, and initially promotes the market by searching for friends in the address book, inviting QQ and microblog friends, and other ways.

2.2. Promotion Period

From April to September 2017, TikTok began to advertise its products, trying to invite more users to join. TikTok's personalized recommendation algorithm is relatively novel, which makes it a big selling

point. At the same time, Tiktok's special effects and functions have also been updated. It has added 3D series dithering watermarks, cool props, and stickers, improved the filter and beauty effects, and introduced Tiktok stories, music brushes, hair dyeing effects, 360-degree panoramic video, and other functions, further improving the look and appeal of the video.

2.3. Growth Period

Since September 2017, TikTok has had a large number of users, so it needs to ensure the quality of short videos. In order to deal with this problem, Tiktok optimized the reporting and comment functions, launched the anti-addiction system, and invited representatives to discuss and draw up the Tiktok Community Convention to improve the content quality and management level of the platform. Not only that, in 2018, Tiktok also went international. This is a very important breakthrough in the history of TikTok. Tiktok launched the international version of Tiktok and acquired the music platform to expand its user base. At the same time, the platform began to diversify, with various bloggers joining in. In 2019, Tiktok, which is at the peak of its popularity, carried out commercial exploration, which means making profits by means of live broadcasts with goods and advertising. This move has attracted many brands and merchants to settle in, thereby earning more money.

2.4. Rapid Development Period

TikTok has ensured healthy and positive content through continuous optimization of functions and user experience, as well as strict management and control mechanisms. At the same time, it has increased the stickiness of users through multi-channel drainage and cash flow mode.

In addition, Tiktok has also experienced a series of important events in its development, such as the merger with Musical.ly, becoming the exclusive social media communication platform for the 2019 CCTV Spring Festival Gala, launching an anti-addiction system, brand integration and upgrading, online web page internal testing, and launching an independent e-commerce app Tiktok box. These events not only promoted Tiktok's development in China but also laid a foundation for its expansion in the international market.

In general, Tiktok has experienced many years of hard research and development from a short video platform at the beginning to a comprehensive platform. Its turning point is the epidemic in early 2020. Because people can't go out, they will choose to watch TikTok to spend this boring time. After this period of time, Tiktok did not relax and did better. So the TikTok that users see now has many things to buy, public welfare can participate, and there will be various types of videos that always meet users' preferences. TikTok provides a good communication platform for both shopkeepers and customers so that everyone can feel their needs are met on this platform. Because of the power of the Internet, it often helps some groups who really need help. And then carry forward this beauty. TikTok is not only a short video social platform, but also a content creation and distribution channel full of creativity and commercial potential, constantly adapting to and leading the development trend of digital media.

3. Success Factors of Tiktok

3.1. The Popularity of Short Video Formats

The biggest success of Tiktok depends on its new mode, namely short video. People may feel bored with long videos and continuous TV dramas, while short videos effectively avoid these drawbacks. TikTok is dominated by short videos, usually lasting 15 seconds to 1 minute, which caters to the fast-paced lifestyle of modern people. According to statistics, short videos are more likely to attract users' attention and increase their viewing frequency. This form of content consumption reduces users' time costs and makes information dissemination more efficient.

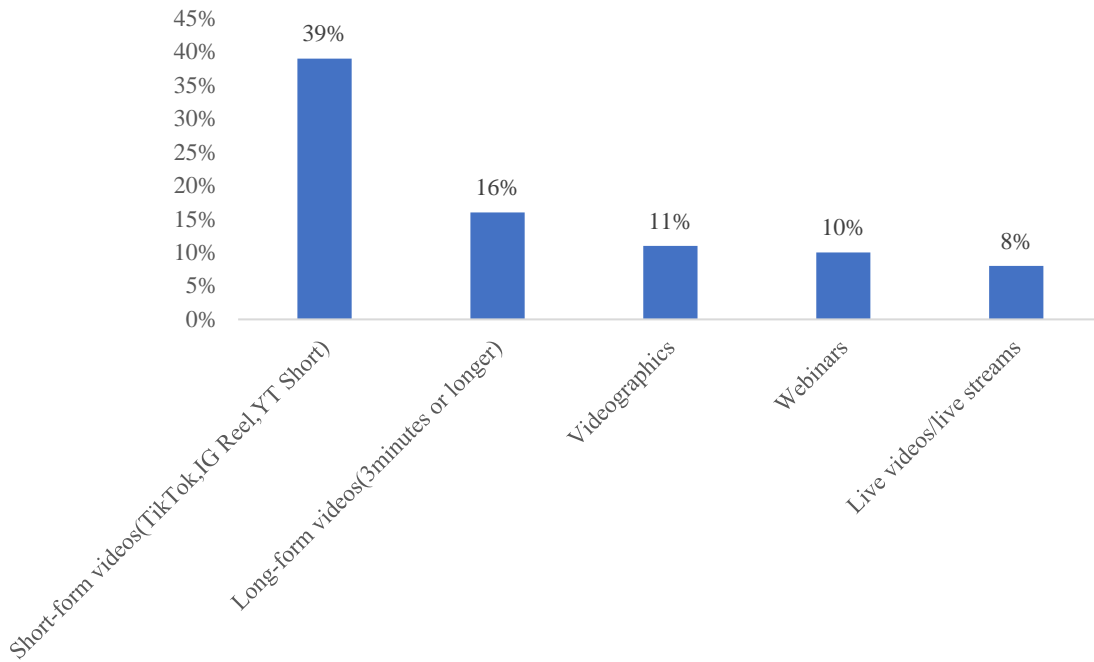


Fig. 1 The popularity of short videos [8]

It can be seen from Fig. 1 that 39% of the population is more inclined to watch short videos such as TikTok, which is enough to prove the success of the "short video craze" started by TikTok.

3.2. User Experience First

In addition to the innovative short video format, TikTok is not stingy in providing services to users. Strong technology and open thinking combine to create TikTok.

TikTok attaches importance to the user experience, and the simple and friendly interface design enables users to get started quickly. After opening the application, users can directly watch content without the need for cumbersome settings and operations. This experience greatly reduces the user's threshold for use. In addition, TikTok adopts the endless rolling short video playing mode, which makes users feel immersed in watching and unconsciously spend a lot of time on the platform (Fig. 2).

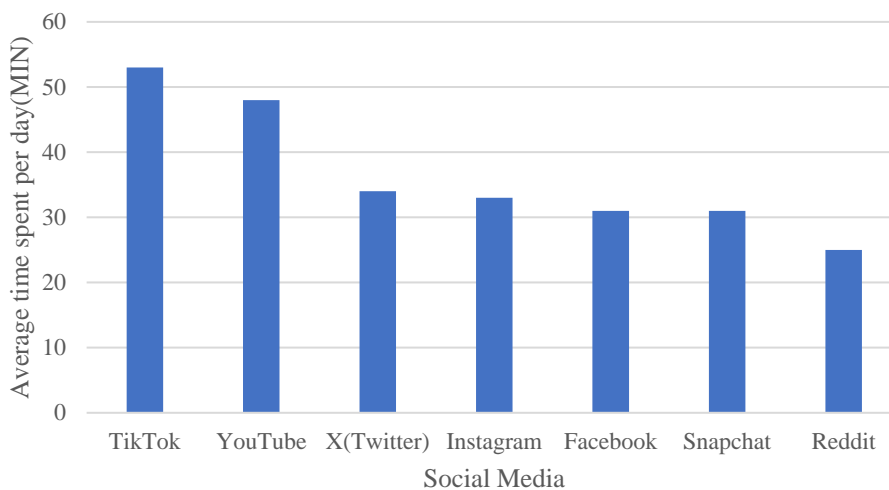


Fig. 2 Average time spent on social networks among US adults per day [9]

It is undeniable that TikTok has not reached the level that can replace Facebook, YouTube, and other software in the United States. But it still ranks first in viewing time, reaching nearly an hour. This fully proves that the TikTok experience for users is excellent and that some home devices consume time unconsciously.

3.3. Strengthening social interaction

TikTok emphasizes social interaction. Users can not only watch videos but also like, comment, share, and create private messages. This interactivity enhances the activity of the community and makes users feel a sense of belonging. The platform has also launched a "follow" function, where users can follow their favorite creators to get the latest updates. Through social interaction, users establish connections and create a positive community atmosphere, further enhancing user retention rates. In addition, Tiktok regularly launches various challenges and activities, such as dance challenges, imitation challenges, etc., to encourage users to participate in and create relevant content. These challenges often spread through specific hashtags, forming community topics and inspiring users' enthusiasm and creativity for participation. Users who participate in the challenge not only gain exposure but also establish connections with other creators through interaction.

3.4. Globalization Strategy

TikTok actively distributes in the international market, especially in the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia, and other regions. By targeting market demands in different regions, the platform can quickly attract a large number of users and expand its user base.

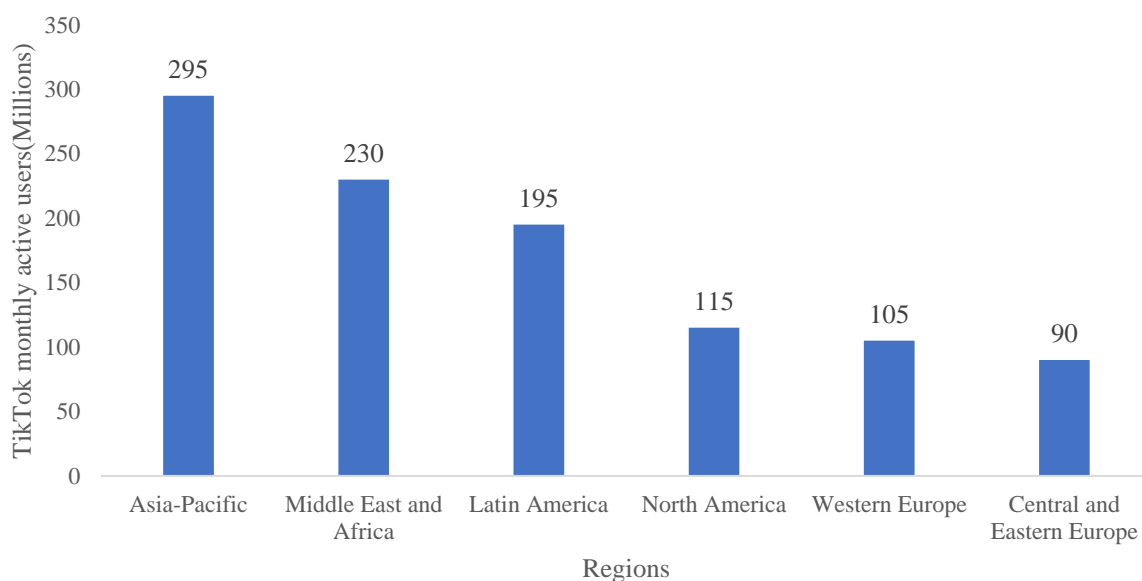


Fig. 3 Tiktok monthly active users by region [9]

It can be seen from Fig. 3 that TikTok, which started in China, has gradually expanded the international market. In the process of global expansion, TikTok pays attention to the production of localized content and adjusts the content according to the cultural customs and hot topics of different countries and regions. For example, the platform will launch relevant challenges and activities based on local culture to make the content more relevant to the lives of local users. In addition, TikTok has launched multilingual versions in many countries, and users can choose their own language for operation and interaction. This linguistic convenience enables users from different countries to better participate in platform activities and enhances communication among global users.

4. Challenges and Prospects of Tiktok

In addition to the benefits of TikTok, it is also facing some difficulties. The following content will elaborate on the difficulties and how to develop based on these difficulties.

4.1. Challenges That Tiktok is Facing

4.1.1. Content regulation and compliance issues

With the surge in user numbers, TikTok is facing enormous pressure for content regulation and compliance. Many countries have stricter requirements for content on social media platforms, involving issues such as youth protection, privacy, and copyright. The platform needs to invest more resources in content review to ensure compliance with local laws and regulations, which not only increases operating costs but may also affect user experience.

TikTok's community guidelines

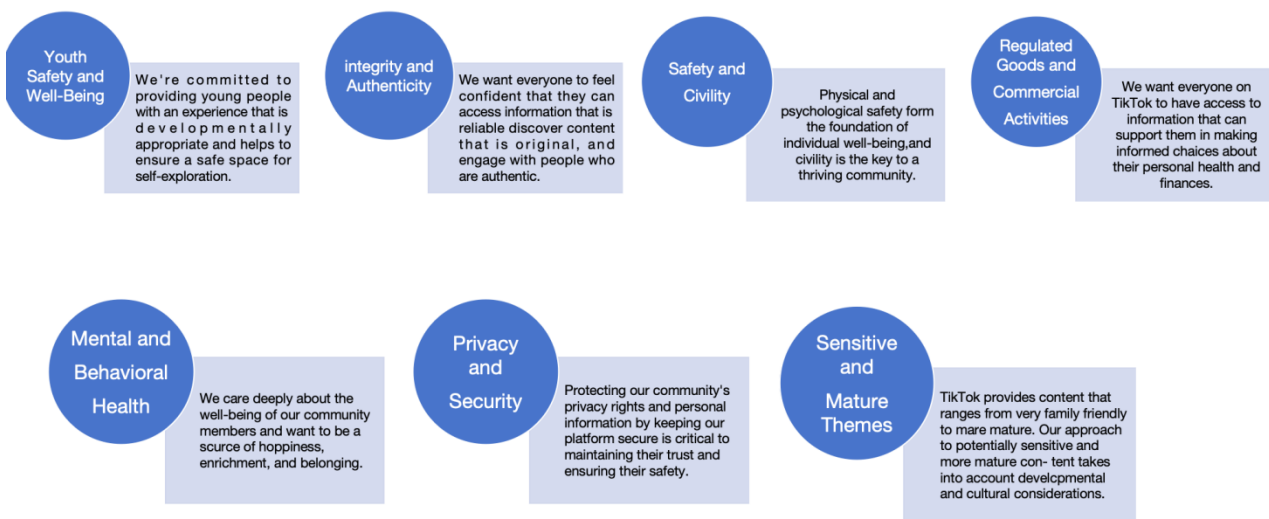


Fig. 4 TikTok's community guidelines [10]

Fig. 4 shows the "Social Pact" set by Tiktok. It can be seen that it contains a lot of sections, which involve the protection of teenagers and the privacy mentioned above. However, there are still some people who take shortcuts and bring negative impacts to society and try to influence TikTok.

4.1.2. Intensifying market competition

The competition in the short video market is becoming increasingly fierce, especially in markets such as the United States and Europe. Other platforms such as YouTube Shorts and Instagram Reels have launched similar features to attract users. In order to maintain market share, TikTok needs to constantly innovate and optimize its content ecology to enhance user loyalty and participation. As mentioned before, the advantage of TikTok lies in the form of a short video, which makes it have a lot of use time in European and American markets, but the use time does not represent all. With the continuous updates of other competitive platforms, it also needs to constantly innovate to maintain people's freshness.

4.1.3. Political factors

This is the most serious point. The international development trend of TikTok is very clear. Once this decision is made and action is taken, political conflict is the most important point that cannot be ignored. The culture and governance philosophy of each country is very different, which makes some

topics very sensitive, especially on the Internet. This means that TikTok needs to spend more energy on reviewing the content of the video.

4.2. Tiktok's Outlook for the Future

After listing various challenges in detail, the future development of TikTok gradually becomes clear.

4.2.1. Technological innovation and functional upgrading

TikTok can improve the user experience through continuous technological innovation, which can be divided into many types. It can refer to technological innovation. For example, utilizing artificial intelligence and augmented reality technology to enhance content creation tools and personalized recommendation systems. This will help attract more creators, improve the quality and diversity of content, and at the same time, new high-tech will not be replaced by competitors, greatly increasing people's usage rate. It can also improve the protection of user privacy and other data, which refers to many aspects, avoiding any sensitive topics and conflicts that may arise, so that there will be no harmful content. Another innovation direction that has not yet been popularized is the "community contribution reward plan", that is, to bring TikTok into real life. TikTok can establish a system to encourage users to actively participate in content comments, sharing, and feedback. By setting up points or level systems, users' interactions and contributions on the platform can be exchanged for physical rewards, exclusive content, or priority participation in activities. This model can not only motivate users to participate in interaction but also enhance the activity of the platform community and users' sense of belonging.

4.2.2. Enhance user mental health support

In this era, people are often under great pressure, and TikTok, a popular application all over the world, can relieve people's pressure from mental health. TikTok can consider launching content and activities related to mental health, providing support and resources to help users cope with stress and anxiety.

5. Conclusion

This paper studies the rise, characteristics, possible difficulties, and future prospects of TikTok. Through a series of materials and data, it can be seen that TikTok has indeed had a significant impact on China and even the world. It is a brand-new media model for people to entertain and relax. However, there are also some problems exposed during the entertainment, such as the political tension caused by different cultural concepts, which is not conducive to the internationalization of TikTok, and the privacy security cannot be guaranteed due to the disordered age characteristics of users. But these problems can be solved by innovation. Innovation from virtual to real can make TikTok richer and different from competitors. It is also observed that people now use TikTok to reduce daily pressure to a great extent. If TikTok can carry out some psychological activities, it may help users. In a word, TikTok's starting point and research and development are at the forefront of science and technology, but the greater the ability, the greater the responsibility, and it would be better to improve the system and try to solve potential social problems.

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