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Red or Black: A Comparative Study of Xiaohongshu and Douyin

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Abstract. This work examines the factors contributing to the differential popularity of Douyin and Xiaohongshu, two leading Chinese social media platforms. By comparing the number of active user downloads,And shows that Xiaohongshu mainly targets female users, with its content primarily focusing on beauty and travel guides. In contrast, Douyin presents a wide range of entertainment-oriented content, appealing to users of all age groups.Under such differences, user stickiness and market strategies are the key reasons why Douyin is more popular than Xiaohongshu. Douyin, relying on its algorithm, pushes content that interests users of different age groups, such as funny jokes and hand gesture dances, which is addictive. In contrast, users come to Xiaohongshu with clear purposes, such as beauty product reviews and travel guides. They leave after using it, with shorter stay times. In addition to these, Douyin has also launched a feature that allows users to "xiaohuoren" together with their friends and family. This feature not only brings relatives and friends who are in different places closer to oneself, but also helps to strengthen the bond between them by sharing videos and other means. As a result, users spend more time on Douyin, which is why Douyin is more popular than Xiaohongshu.

Keywords: Social Media, User Behavior, Market Strategy, Douyin, Xiaohongshu

1. Introduction

Nowadays,social media platforms have become an indispensable part of peoples' lives. Though some scholars have done studies on either Douyin or Xiaohongshu separately [1]. Although some scholars have written articles about Xiaohongshu and Douyin, No scholar has done a systemic comparison between them.

Douyin is more popular than Xiaohongshu because the active users and downloads are more than that of Xiaohongshu. According to the "2024 New Media Ecology Inventory Report" released by the third-party data agency QuestMobile [2] as of October 2024, the average monthly active user scale of Douyin was 786 million, and that of Xiaohongshu was 214 million.In addition,downloads data. Moreover, Xiaohongshu and Douyin have similar function,such as watching videos,creating videos, online shopping and so on. By comparing Xiaohongshu and Douyin (two of the most popular apps in China), we want to understand the factors that decide the popularity of social media in China. Xiaohongshu centers on the "grass-growing"(zhongcao)culture and has built a community dedicated to lifestyle sharing and consumption decision-making; Douyin, on the other hand, provides users

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with a wide variety of entertaining content through short videos, becoming an important platform for all-round entertainment. Despite certain advantages of Xiaohongshu over Douyin, they have different marketing strategies: while Douyin aims to promote entertainment, Xiaohongshu is determined to build an online platform where people can share everyday life guidance. As a result of Xiaohongshu's marketing strategy of pragmatism, Xiaohongshu users are more grassroots, and female-oriented. In fact, Douyin seems more popular than Xiaohongshu. Why this is the case?

2. Comparion between Douyin and Xiaohongshu

2.1. Douyin

Douyin was founded in 2016 and it is a social media platform for short videos. There are many forms about the short videos, such as dance, songs, music, food and so on. Douyin satisfies the different users that have different needs. Douyin are mainly in the vertical screen format. The playback interface is simple and the operation is convenient. Users only need to slide up and down to switch videos, achieving an immersive viewing experience.

In addition, Douyin also supports functions such as live streaming and e-commerce, providing users with diversified interactive and consumption scenarios. Douyin's live streaming is very successful, bringing tremendous profit to the company and contributing to its market share. In live - commerce, they offer diverse products, ensure quality, and provide good prices, winning fans' trust. Their single - live - stream sales often reach tens of millions of RMB, creating substantial economic value. Their key to success is content innovation and understanding user needs, setting a great example in live - streaming e - commerce.

The live - streaming success of Crazy Little Yang Brothers on Douyin is remarkable. They gained a vast following with unique, humorous videos. Their live - streams, full of funny interactions, draw big audiences. It elaborates on Zhang Qingyang's growth process from his early prank and challenge - participation videos to his later focus on family - themed comedy sketches. It also mentions his huge popularity on Douyin, with his live - streaming sessions regularly attracting over 1 million viewers, and analyzes the reasons for his success.

Back to your main point: how influencer economy and e-commerce results in Douyin's huge popularity. Make full use of societal creativity [3]. Here is a reference for the successful live - streaming case of Crazy Little Yang Brothers:

reference is 'Crazy Little Yang Brother' is the Chinese TikTok star you need to know on The China Project. It elaborates on Zhang Qingyang's growth process from his early prank and challenge - participation videos to his later focus on family - themed comedy sketches. It also mentions his huge popularity on Douyin, with his live - streaming sessions regularly attracting over 1 million viewers, and analyzes the reasons for his success.(The China Project. (2022, November 9). 'Crazy Little Yang Brother' is the Chinese TikTok star you need to know. https://thechinaproject.com/2022/11/09/crazy - little - yang - brother - is - the - chinese - tiktok - star - you - need - to - know/)

2.2. Xiaohongshu

Xiaohongshu was founded in 2013.At first,The main function of Xiaohongshu used to be providing travel and shopping guides [4]. It is slowly branching out into stuff like beauty and fashion.Xiaohongshu is got a clean and sleek interface, with a double-column feed that lets you

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scroll through tons of contentin no time [5]. Xiaohongshu features graphic - and - text notes, and the production cost of this feature is low, making it easy for ordinary users to participate.

Compared with Douyin, Xiaohongshu has three main functional difference convenient to users: the gross-growing culture, Xiaohongshu's searching, and a bigger proportion of female users [6] on Xiaohongshu compared to that on Douyin the proportion of female users on Xiaohongshu is relatively larger compared to that on Douyin.

Firstly, Xiaohongshu centers around the "grass-growing"(zhongcao) culture and has built a community dedicated to lifestyle sharing and consumption decision-making [7]. The grass-growing culture of Xiaohongshu has become popular thanks to users' authentic sharing. People write about the great products they've used on the platform, such as excellent cosmetics and interesting tourist destinations. The graphics and texts are simple and straightforward. When other users see these posts, they find them credible and will leave messages asking how to buy the products and whether they are good or not. As a result, through such interactions back and forth, there is a lot of chatting, and the community becomes lively. For brands, having users help with grass-growing is more effective than running advertisements. Many small brands have seen a significant increase in sales through this approach. In a nutshell, Xiaohongshu has become a must-visit "grass-growing hub" before making purchases by relying on users' mutual recommendations, and this is what we call the grass-growing culture.

Secondly, Xiaohongshu has certain advantages in the aspect of search. Xiaohongshu has a rich search guidance system, including features like search box prompt words and popular search categories. These can help users clarify their search intentions and find desired content more quickly [8].When users enter specific keywords on Xiaohongshu, they can accurately view notes with high matching degrees, thus having their needs met. Due to the entertaining and fragmented nature of Douyin's content, the matching degree between search results and users' needs is relatively lower. In terms of search accuracy, Xiaohongshu has a greater advantage.For example, if the users take searching for "travel guides" on Xiaohongshu and Douyin as an example. On Xiaohongshu, after you type in the keyword, it uses your past browsing history and an algorithm to show you very relevant notes. For example, if you often check out beach vacations, you'll see notes like "5 - day Qingdao travel plan" with details on places to visit, eat, and stay.Nonetheless,on Douyin, when you search for "travel guides", the videos are all over the place. There are funny travel moments, music videos about traveling, and not many useful, in - depth travel guides.Thirdly,With approximately 70% of its users being female, Redbook can reach female consumers more precisely in terms of content and marketing, giving it an edge over Douyin [9].

With around 70% of its users being female, Xiaohongshu has a distinct edge. Douyin has a more evenly - distributed gender ratio, catering to a wide - spectrum audience. Redbook's female - dominated user base enables highly targeted content and marketing strategies. Female users on Redbook actively share product experiences, like detailed makeup tutorials and in - depth reviews of skincare products. Their content, rich in personal stories and aesthetically - pleasing visuals, attracts a dedicated female following and fosters a close - knit community. For instance, when a new lipstick brand launches on Redbook, female influencers can quickly create a buzz, with their reviews directly influencing the brand's sales among female consumers. In contrast, on Douyin, where content caters to diverse interests of both genders, it's more challenging for brands targeting specifically female consumers to cut through the noise. Douyin's content leans more towards entertainment and short - form, attention - grabbing videos, while Redbook's longer - form, detailed product - related posts better serve the decision - making process of female shoppers [10]. This

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makes Redbook a more effective platform for brands aiming to engage with and sell to female customers.

Finally, There are significant gender differences between the users of Xiaohongshu and Douyin in the realm of social media. According to statistics, among Xiaohongshu's over 300 million monthly active users, females account for nearly 80%. While Douyin also has slightly more female users, they only make up about 51.5% of the total, and the overall gender distribution is more balanced.

This difference stems from the distinct platform origins and content ecosystems. Xiaohongshu initially started as a platform for sharing overseas beauty product shopping experiences, precisely targeting the female consumer market. Later, it expanded into vertical fields such as fashion styling and lifestyle, and its content is closely centered around women's pursuit of beauty and a high quality of life. For example, users can find detailed lipstick swatches, seasonal outfit guides, and home renovation tutorials on the platform, which meet women's needs for obtaining real-life experiences before making consumption decisions.

In contrast, Douyin positions itself as a "universal short video" platform, with its content covering diverse fields including entertainment, humor, talent challenges, and knowledge popularization. Its target audience spans all age groups and genders. Although the platform also features beauty and fashion content that female users are fond of, its entertainment-oriented nature has dispersed the gender proportion, resulting in a lower female user percentage. For instance, Douyin's popular "universal challenge" activities often attract users through fun interactions, and content sections favored by male users, such as technology, games, and automobiles, also hold important positions.

Simply, most of Xiaohongshu's users are women. This is because its social interaction atmosphere is better than that of Douyin. Douyin's content is very entertaining and appeals to a wide range of people. There's something for everyone of all ages to enjoy. So, about the same number of men and women use Douyin.

3. Why Douyin is more popular

Douyin is more popular than Xiaohongshu,and there are many reasons for this.First of all, Douyin offers a wide variety of contents that cater to people of all ages and have a broad adaptation range. These contents include entertaining videos such as funny short plays and popular dance challenges, which are very suitable for users to relax and unwind. At the same time, it also has educational and knowledge-related contents, such as knowledge explanations and practical language learning techniques. No matter how old the users are or what their interests are, they can always find contents that attract them on Douyin. This extensive range of contents has attracted a large number of users, thus making people increasingly fond of using Douyin rather than Xiaohongshu. Besides, the algorithm of Douyin is quite intelligent. It carefully analyzes each user's viewing habits and preferences. Then, it pushes personalized videos to users. For instance, if I usually like to watch videos about kittens, Douyin will, based on the background data, push some videos like "How to Raise a Good Pet Cat? Cat Food" to me, ensuring that they see the content they are most interested in. This personalized experience makes it easy for users to get addicted to the platform. They often spend a long time browsing and watching videos, which greatly enhances user stickiness. Moreover, Douyin has a simple and user-friendly interface. It is very popular among young people worldwide. Its user base is very diverse, including people of different genders, ages, and cultural backgrounds. In contrast, Xiaohongshu mainly focuses on specific fields such as fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. It has cultivated a group of loyal and active users in these areas. However, due to its more professional and specific content, its potential audience is relatively limited compared to Douyin. Although there

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are many practical product reviews and detailed beauty tutorials created by users on Xiaohongshu, its content recommendation system is not as precise as that of Douyin. It cannot fully meet the diverse interests of all users.Moreover, the majority of Xiaohongshu's users are women, and their interests are concentrated in specific fields. Therefore, in the broader Internet market, Xiaohongshu's overall popularity is lower than that of Douyin. The strategies of the two platforms are completely different. Xiaohongshu focuses on life and consumption. Users like to share their shopping experiences and life experiences. Xiaohongshu also collaborates with many brands and ingeniously integrates advertisements into the content shared by users, making it convenient for everyone to refer to before shopping and establishing a trust community.Douyin is a comprehensive entertainment platform that focuses on various entertaining short videos. It encourages users to create videos such as dance and funny ones. It also has diverse advertising forms, which can attract advertisers of different types and reach users of all ages and with various interests. As a result, it enjoys a high popularity in the market.

4. Entertainment and life sharing

Douyin and Xiaohongshu are two apps with relatively high popularity in China. However, there are some differences between them.

Douyin is all about having fun. It's full of short videos—like funny skits where people crack jokes or trendy dance challenges anyone can join. These clips are quick and easy to watch, perfect for a quick laugh or distraction. The app uses an algorithm to show you more of what you like, so if you watch one makeup video, you'll see more beauty content. It attracts everyone, from students killing time to office workers relaxing.

Xiaohongshu, on the other hand, focuses on sharing real life. Users post about fashion (like outfit ideas and shopping tips), beauty (detailed makeup tutorials), and travel (hidden spots and budget guides). Posts often have nice photos and step-by-step advice, helping people learn from each other. Brands team up with users here to promote products through honest reviews.

So, Douyin is for quick entertainment, while Xiaohongshu is for practical life tips. That's why they have different kinds of users and marketing styles.

5. User stickness

User stickness is not only an attachment to the platform but also an attachment to influencers users follow.

Douyin and Xiaohongshu represent two completely different types of social media platforms. Douyin fully focuses on creating an entertainment - driven model. Its platform is filled with highly eye - catching short videos, such as trendy dance challenges and hilarious comedy skits. The algorithm specifically selects and pushes these high - popularity and fast - paced contents to users, which perfectly caters to modern people's preference for instant entertainment. As a result, it has been able to attract a huge number of users in a short time. However, users typically just seek fun when using Douyin. They watch the videos and then move on, rarely developing a sense of dependence on the platform. Once a more interesting entertainment platform emerges, users are very likely to switch to it. Xiaohongshu, on the other hand, follows a life - sharing approach. Users on this platform share extremely detailed shopping reviews, travel guides, and various life tips. For instance, beauty enthusiasts often visit Xiaohongshu to find the latest makeup recommendations, read about other users' experiences, and actively participate in discussions in the comment sections. This kind of sharing and interaction based on common life interests has enabled users to develop a

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strong sense of belonging to the platform. People often feel like opening Xiaohongshu out of habit, and the user retention rate is extremely high. In summary, Douyin quickly gains a large number of users with its entertaining content but struggles to retain them, while Xiaohongshu cultivates user loyalty through life - sharing, resulting in much stronger user stickiness.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion,The distinct market strategies of Douyin and Xiaohongshu offer many inspirations for business development. Douyin focuses on entertainment as its core, leveraging rich and diverse content to meet users' demands for entertainment. Meanwhile, its powerful algorithm precisely analyzes user behaviors and delivers personalized content, significantly enhancing the user experience. Additionally, Douyin expands its influence through the effects of celebrities and influencers, and strengthens user interaction through online challenge activities, rapidly accumulating a large user base. Xiaohongshu, on the other hand, adopts a different approach. It prioritizes social interaction and shares, providing users with a platform for sharing and interaction. It also emphasizes user-generated content and encourages users to participate actively. As a result, Xiaohongshu has achieved remarkable success in building a community-oriented platform.

In contrast, Xiaohongshu focuses on the field of life sharing and encourages users to post in-depth product reviews, travel diaries and other contents, thus forming a highly sticky community atmosphere. The sharing of content based on common interests not only provides practical value to users but also establishes trust bonds among users, cultivating a highly loyal user group.The success of Douyin and Xiaohongshu has brought quite a lot of practical experience to other companies.If an enterprise wants to quickly attract a large number of users, it can learn from Douyin and produce more interesting and entertaining entertainment content; if it values long-term support and deep participation from users more, the model of Xiaohongshu focusing on its dedicated fields and encouraging users to share their lives is a very good example.

In terms of user operation, Douyin retains users through algorithmic recommendations of personalized content and holding interactive activities; Xiaohongshu, on the other hand, creates a community atmosphere of sharing and communication to make users willing to come back frequently. This reminds enterprises that they must attach importance to user experience and use appropriate methods to enhance user stickiness.

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