

A Study on the Self-presentation of Ethnic Minority Youth on Short Videos

Qingyi Fu*

School of Literature and Journalism, Chengdu University, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China

*Corresponding author: Qingyi Fu, 390617743@qq.com

Copyright: © 2024 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited

Abstract: This study conducts an in-depth study on the self-presentation behavior of ethnic minority youth on the short video platform, and aims to reveal the characteristics and values behind it. As an important participant of the short video platform, the self-presentation behavior of ethnic minority youth has an important social value. This study analyzes the self-presentation behavior of ethnic minority youth on the short video platform from the perspectives of impression management and background and also notes the possible negative effects of the short video platform. It is expected to further promote social attention to and respect for ethnic minority cultures to build a harmonious and diversified social environment.

Keywords: Ethnic minority youth; Self-presentation; Ideal self; Careful performance

Online publication: June 7, 2024

1. Research background

Mobile short video platform encapsulates the technical characteristics of the Web 3.0 era and vigorously integrates Internet thinking. At present, it has hundreds of millions of users, which has become a normal way of people's daily expression ^[1]. According to the data, the most commonly used short video application for users aged under 25 and 25–40 is Douyin. Douyin has become the most familiar and popular media product for people, especially the younger generation, and has also become an important field of research. The topic of short videos has already set off a lot of research upsurge in communication and social circles, but there are relatively few research perspectives on the image presentation of short videos for ethnic-specific groups. Based on this, the article tries to analyze the self-presentation behavior of the minority youth group in the short video through the methods of content and in-depth interviews.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theory of self-presentation

Canadian sociologist Irving Goffman believes that "society is a huge stage, and individuals, as performers on

the stage, are eager to build an ideal image that meets the expectations of others”, and this process of building an idealized image is “impression management” and gradually generate the “foreground” and “background”.” Reception is the ideal display of personal image, and the stage of ideal performance to achieve the expected expectations and satisfaction. In contrast to the “front stage” performance, “backstage” usually refers to the true self that is hidden in the front but usually revealed behind the scenes ^[2].

The short video platform meets the needs of ethnic minority youth to conduct self-performance. At this “stage”, the account number, nickname, and each posted video reveal the users’ self-management and presentation purpose that beautify and highlight their daily life through various acting skills ^[3]. Culture is in an absolute state of movement and migration. Any culture in the modern media environment is not unique but needs to exchange and collide with other cultures, and all image presentation and communication need to rely on the media power of the mass media ^[4].

2.2. Global research status

The widespread popularity of short videos as a new form of media has also brought a series of social problems, especially the profound impact on the younger generation, which has attracted wide attention from all sectors of society.

Scholars have studied the impact of the application of short videos. Zhang et al. found through transnational research that the popularity and convenience of short videos lead to overuse in college students, which in turn has a negative impact on their studies, life, and mental health ^[5]. The study further proposed interventions to strengthen college students’ self-control and enhance the supervision of parents and educators to address this problem. In addition, with the social changes, youth participation, mental health, and their role in social movement have gradually become the focus of research. Jian et al. explored how short video platforms influence social movements, especially their key role in the Black Lives Matter movement which foreshadows the potential influence of short videos in future social movements ^[6]. The domestic academic circle has studied the social and cultural influence of the short video platform deeply. Fu explored the media practice of ethnic minority Internet celebrities in short videos and revealed the pressure of their cultural display and assimilation ^[7]. In short, the cultural performance of ethnic minority youth on the short video platform is not only the inheritance of tradition but also the embrace of modernity. The opportunities and challenges coexist, which deserve in-depth exploration by the academic community.

3. Study content and research methods

3.1. Research content

This study analyzes the self-presentation forms of ethnic minority youth groups on the short video platform, including content creation, performance mode, interactive communication, and other aspects. Observing and analyzing these forms reveals how they use short video platforms to display their ethnic culture, living customs, and values. The study also emphasizes the relationship between self-presentation and social identity and the identity construction of ethnic minority youth groups on the short video platform. The study discusses how they shape their social image on the short video platform and how they seek a sense of identity through self-presentation.

3.2. Research methods

Through semi-structured or open interviews, and in-depth communication with ethnic minority youth users to understand their personal experiences, feelings, and ideas when using the short video platform. In the study,

25 young ethnic minority users were first sent private messages to explain the interview situation, and the selected subjects included Bai, Tibetan, Miao, and other ethnic groups. Finally, 15 respondents were identified and they were effectively interviewed. Before the interview, the 15 young people's Douyin accounts were previously observed, investigated, and prepared, and the interview outline was drawn up. The interview is mainly conducted online via telephone, WeChat, and Douyin. The interview content mainly includes the basic information of the interviewees, the motivation for self-presentation on Douyin, and the impression management in the process of interaction with other users.

4. Research finding

4.1. Analysis of the current situation of the self-presentation behavior of ethnic minority youth

With the popularity of cultural and tourism publicity in recent years, the image of ethnic minorities has gradually clearly entered the public view. Many people have changed their destiny due to short videos, and more ethnic youth groups have been encouraged to share their lives and culture on various short video platforms. Ethnic minority youth will express and present themselves through homepage information and publish text or video works. The homepage information includes the nickname, Douyin account, gender, followers, number of likes, number of fans, and so on. This series of expressions can reflect self-cognition and display the desire of the account subject to some extent.

4.2. Summary of the characteristics of the self-presentation behavior of ethnic minority youth

4.2.1. The “ideal self” constructed under impression management

The sharing of young ethnic users on the Douyin platform cannot be separated from the technical support. The official “cut screen” tool on the app is convenient for the content production of ordinary users. Xiao Bao said, “I think the cut screen operation is very simple, upload according to the requirements, and you can adjust the special effects by yourself.” With the ease of operation of editing technology, people can present their own images through more design, and become their own account curators.

The weak social attribute of Douyin, to some extent, provides users with a more open and free stage. However, with the improvement of friend recommendation and other functions, users' self-presentation on the Douyin platform needs to deal with many relationships and connections from real life but also to maintain that ideal audience who do not know. The performers usually choose some objective materials to avoid misunderstanding. In the process of media use, they will naturally follow the guidance of the slogan “record a good life” to avoid interpersonal conflicts and confrontation.

4.2.2. Ethnic elements supported by culture are prominent

Through the minority youth account, it was found that most of the minority youth account personal page basic information, and video content elements all involve symbols about ethnic characteristics, such as wearing ethnic accessories in the video. A respondent said in the interview: “I want to let more people see our Tibetan culture in this way, and the flow is very good, a lot of people love it.”

It can be found that in public personal works, young people from ethnic minorities are willing to highlight their ethnic character through the “label” function. “I will label them at the back of my works because many people cannot distinguish the appearance between the Yi, Tibetan, and other groups, to avoid misunderstanding.” The label function launched by Douyin has become a convenient way for national youth to

express and present. They take the initiative to place their geographical location, life scenes, and other important information in a broader social situation, and actively carry out communication and interaction with the outside world.

4.2.3. Backstage under the front of the elaborate performance

With the continuous development of media technology, more and more backstage behaviors are put in the front. Through the interview, it was learned that most of them are willing to present more private content such as residential interior design and religious ancestral halls in ethnic minority areas. This behavior, which seems to present the background situation in the front, is essentially a performance. Through the interview, it was learned that most ethnic young people think that the authenticity of the video content is very important, “highly appropriate with life, and can also create traffic”, said the interviewer, Xiao Jin.

5. Thinking about the value of ethnic minority youth’s self-presenting behavior

Driven by the digital wave, the young people of ethnic minorities show themselves through short video platforms, which not only brings them opportunities to show the charm of ethnic culture but also is accompanied by a series of difficulties that need to be overcome.

First of all, cultural homogenization is a prominent problem. Some ethnic minority youth may unconsciously give up or dilute the unique elements of ethnic culture to cater to the trend, leading to the lack of personality in short video content. Secondly, the algorithm recommendation mechanism of short video platforms may also cause some restrictions on the self-presentation of ethnic minority youth, and some short videos with cultural connotations may be buried. Therefore, the youth of ethnic minorities need to adhere to the ethnic cultural characteristics, while actively innovating their way of expression and showing themselves in a more real and vivid way. At the same time, society and platforms also need to strengthen the supervision and guidance of short video platforms, to create a healthier and positive network environment for ethnic minority youth.

6. Conclusion

The understanding of the self-presentation relationship between media and minority groups can be deepened by studying the strategy on the short video platform. This study also has some limitations and shortcomings. Due to the limitations of ability and snowball sampling methods, the ethnic diversity of the research subjects is insufficient and the sample size is small. The analysis and conclusions of the study all depend on the semi-structured interviews with 15 graduate students. At the same time, the research objects and researchers are acquaintances in the real world or are introduced by acquaintances. Some human elements make it difficult to avoid the subjectivity of research data. Future research needs to avoid this issue and collect more neutral research data.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Reference

- [1] Wang Z, 2023, Research on the Self-presentation of Tibetan Youth Image from the Perspective of Drama Theory: Take users of Douyin Platform as an Example. *China Dissertations Database*, 2023(4): 25–70 + 75.
- [2] Mei OG, 2021, *Self-presentation in Daily Life*, translated by Feng Gang, thesis, Peking University Press.
- [3] Zhang XY, 2021, Excessive Self-Presentation of WeChat Moments in Youth Groups. *Audio-visual*, 2021(4): 40–60.
- [4] Li X, 2019, Research on the Image of Mass Media and Minority Media: Chinese Local Perspective. *Research on Transmission Competence*, 2019(17): 2–5.
- [5] Zhang N, Hazarika B, Chen K, et al., 2023, A Cross-national Study on the Excessive Use of Short-video Applications among College Students. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2023(8): 145.
- [6] Jiang Y, Jin X, Deng Q, 2020, How Short-form Video Platforms Challenge the Protest Paradigm in the Black Lives Matter Movement. *Douyin Matters*, 2020(12): 15–23.
- [7] Fu KK, 2023, Image, Representation, Dissimilation: the Media Practice of Ethnic Minority Internet Celebrities in the Short Video Platform. *New Media Research*, 2023(18): 72–75 + 79.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.