

WANG YE

## Scene rules and traffic logic of short videos

Short videos have distinct social attributes. As an important medium for information sharing, venting emotions, consumption, and entertainment, they largely reflect the daily life, social relations, values, and even intellectual and cultural life of community members. New short video scene rules have been established in terms of communication logic and experiential design, increasing user stickiness of platforms, and attracting more users to engage in community bonding on short video platforms.

In the “community plus e-commerce” model, traffic constitutes a crucial pathway to monetization for content producers, while causing a shift in short video production from work-centered to consumption-centered.

### Scene construction for community engagement

Scene construction is an essential component of short video content production. It not only provides additional information to enhance emotional communication but also fosters a sense of identity among community members. The UGC (user-generated content) model is commonly adopted in short video content production, generating economic benefits when the number of followers reaches a certain level, thus attracting more users to participate in the creation of virtual communities.

In the era of intelligent media, data analysis techniques are employed to uncover the interests and preferences of community members, allowing



The 3rd “Beijing - A Global City” Short Video Contest kicked off in Beijing Garden Expo Park on May 31. Photo: Shi Chunyang/CNSphoto

for the establishment of personalized tags. The construction of virtual scenes allows for closer alignment with the “presence” of community members and enables finer scene segmentation, thereby narrowing the psychological distance between the platform and users.

Scenes not only serve as spatial forms for short video content production, but also play a crucial role in product marketing. Scene marketing is a marketing strategy tailored to the specific consumption needs of community members. Short video scene marketing, in particular, creates a vibrant and noticeably guided experiential environment, and stimulates community members’ desire to consume with targeted marketing messages.

Scene construction is closely connected to the mediatization of society and the restructuring of consump-

tion. Visual culture and consumerism are changing people’s lifestyle and ways of production, while radically blurring the boundary between production and consumption. As the public becomes accustomed to the seamless integration of information scenes into their daily lives, new habits of information consumption and reception are formed subconsciously.

### Emotional connection among community members

Content production and the stimulation of consumption are both connected to another essential feature of short video platform communities: emotional connection among community members. Emotional connection involves the empathy among community members as information receivers, as well as the emotional exchange and communication between community members as information

producers.

Information receivers vent their emotions by commenting on short videos, and find solace in the positive response from other members. Information producers, as topic setters, trigger the expression of other community members’ inner feelings through the model of “social relations plus emotional factors.”

Information producers can develop personal influence among their followers through personalized character tags. Whether they can receive more attention and recognition largely depends on the emotional investment of their followers. Emotional investment and connection also serve as a short video marketing strategy. Emotional marketing creates psychological resonance by stimulating users’ emotional needs. Users then become psychologically dominated by impulse or empathy rather than the real need for the product, leaning towards emotional satisfaction and psychological identification.

### Conversion of community behavior into traffic

As the media reshapes social interaction, the public’s life scenarios and information trajectories leave traces on social media platforms and can be recorded. This data and information allows short video platforms to accurately assess the environment and lifestyle of community members. By utilizing algorithms, platforms can deliver scene content that aligns with the users’ environment and lifestyle. The ultimate goal is to simulate

community members’ consumption desire by integrating real-life scenes with virtual scenes.

Traffic usually consists of public domain and private domain traffic that correspond to two different mechanisms. Public domain traffic is shared among platform users, while private domain traffic is exclusively owned by the producing party. Platforms can use algorithms to accurately gauge the dissemination power of short videos, which serves as the basis for traffic distribution.

After acquiring public domain traffic, short video producers need to cultivate their unique content style, pay close attention to data and hot-button issues, optimize planning processes, and innovate content production in a timely manner in order to facilitate the transformation of community members into target audience. Active interaction with users is required to gain more trust and engagement on the part of users, thereby converting public domain traffic into private domain traffic, while increasing product competitiveness and brand influence.

As short videos dissolve the centrality of the communication subject and change the way information is encoded, they give rise to an open, two-way, interactive network ecosystem. From initial content filling to high-quality content production, short video platforms maintain user activity and content quality through traffic, thereby creating a self-circulation within the community and building a decentralized virtual community and marketing platform.

Wang Ye is from the College of Chinese Language and Literature of Northwest Normal University.

GAO YIDUO

## Sociology of empathy: research, reflection, outlook

How are people connected with each other? What makes solidarity and social integration possible? These questions have been persistently explored by sociology since classical times. Amidst the tumultuous waves of modernization, empathy between individuals and between groups is becoming increasingly scarce. It has been subject to theoretical and empirical misconceptions, either seen as an inherent moral element or a natural human capacity.

What exactly is empathy? How should sociology articulate the social construction of empathy? These are new questions to be answered in our time, giving rise to the exploration of the sociology of empathy.

Empathy is often regarded as the exclusive research object of certain disciplines such as psychology. It is believed to be a physiological phenomenon that emerges prior to the development of self-awareness, and even an ability that humans share with other animals. However, this

view of empathy overlooks its nature as a social construct, and the paradigm of natural sciences does not adequately understand the fact that empathy is defined by various elements of social structure.

Many thinkers assume that the “community” and solidarity have disintegrated in modern society, with altruism and empathy dominated by discourses of power, libido, and social control. This shift has raised a number of questions. Is the loss of empathy truly the sole aspect of modern society? Are individualism and empathy mutually exclusive?

While various types of emotions have been studied in field of the sociology of emotions, empathy remains relatively understudied. It is related but not equivalent to other types of emotions, and thus has a unique theoretical role.

Scholars’ definitions of empathy differ in content and approach. In terms of content, some argue that empathy only involves sharing the

feelings of someone who has experienced a negative event, while others think empathy means feeling what another person is experiencing, whether positive or negative.

There are several approaches to understanding the construction of empathy, including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and integrated approaches. The first three approaches focus respectively on the cognitive mechanism, emotional transmission process, and behavioral transformation pathway of the construction of empathy, while the last one is the integration of these three approaches.

The field of the sociology of empathy tends towards diversity in theoretical approaches, of which the commonly adopted include symbolic interactionism, social exchange theory, and critical social theory. Several scholars have attempted to conduct systematic research on the sociology of empathy.

As an emerging field, the sociology

of empathy has many unresolved problems. From a theoretical perspective, first, a wealth of theoretical resources in sociology can be further exploited to gain insight into what makes empathy possible and the social interpretation of empathy. Second, more studies are needed to gradually develop consensus and research paradigms in this field. Third, the connotations and extensions of core concepts such as empathy, sympathy, and compassion, as well as their connections and differences need to be further clarified. Fourth, it is necessary to elucidate the relationship between the sociology of empathy and the sociology of morality.

Empirical research abounds with questions as well. How can the research on empathy be theoretically connected to research on other types of emotions? In what ways does the sociology of empathy provide feedback to social policies and their practices?

The reality of the “empathy deficit”

has made empathy an increasingly popular concept in academia and the public sphere. Criminal cases and conflicts in our daily life underscore the urgent need to rebuild empathy among the public. Sociologists and social work professionals have a duty to contribute to this cause, and we are convinced that empathy is an integral component of the modern discourse.

In the midst of China’s rapid transformation, the development of a sociological understanding of empathy necessitates ongoing efforts from successive generations of scholars, particularly those engaged in closely aligned disciplines like the sociology of emotions and the sociology of morality. It is important to explore the local wisdom while introducing the latest research findings from abroad.

Gao Yiduo is from the School of Public Administration at Hangzhou Normal University.