

Research on Public Interaction in the Comment Section of Douyin Accounts: Taking Douyin Influencer "Datou Zezi" as an Example

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Abstract. As a leading short-video platform with a high user daily active rate, the comment sections of regional culture-related bloggers on Douyin serve as an ideal venue for observing the interactions within real social communities. This paper integrates dialogue theory and symbolic interaction theory, and regards the comment section of "Datou Zezi" as a "symbolic dialogue field", analyzing the inter-constructive mechanism of multi-voice dialogue structure and shared symbol system. It adopts the case study method and qualitative content analysis method using the comment section of "Datou Zezi" as a case. However, current research lacks in-depth examinations of spontaneous daily interactions based on a common regional culture. There are few theoretical studies that integrate conversation theory with symbolic interactionism. This study reveals that the comment section constitutes a "symbolic dialogue space". The interaction between dialogue and symbols forms inherent rules and Guangdong culture. By integrating the theories of dialogue and symbol interaction, it fills the gap in the micro-study of regional cultural communities of individual bloggers.

Keywords: Douyin, Regional Culture, Fan Community, Symbolic Interaction, Multi-voice Dialogue

1. Introduction

The widespread popularity of social media has led to the transformation of short-video platforms from entertainment consumption platforms to important digital public communication venues. Douyin has become an important short-video platform, with its daily active users now reaching 680 million. The comment section of Douyin, as the core venue for participatory behavior, has long transcended its subordinate supplementary role of video content and has become the core space for public emotional expression, opinion sharing, symbol practice and community identification. Its interaction forms and mechanisms are an important entry point for understanding daily communication in the digital age [1]. Compared to the short-term public opinion exchanges triggered by public events, the daily interactions in the comment sections of bloggers specializing in life and regional culture can better reflect the interaction logic and cultural characteristics of the

community. Current academic research on the comment sections of short videos mainly focuses on how to utilize platform mechanisms to implement specific communication policies or analyze the public opinion ecology of hot events. However, it relatively neglects the in-depth description of the spontaneous and continuous cultural practices and meaning negotiation processes within these comment sections, and rarely integrates dialogue theory and symbolic interaction theory to systematically expound the generation mechanism of the community culture.

Most existing studies have approached online community interactions from a single perspective. This study integrates dialogue theory and symbolic interaction theory, conceptualizing the "Datou Zezi" comment section as a "symbolic dialogue field". Through in-depth interpretation of the highly interactive comment chains, it reveals the mutual construction mechanism of dialogue and symbols as well as the logic of community culture formation. Based on this, the Douyin blogger "Datou Zezi" has gained the attention of viewers through the consistent output of Guangdong regional culture content and his distinct personal style. This has led to frequent, stable and relevant viewpoints and responses in the comments section, as well as the formation of a unique community attribute. Therefore, this study takes the comment section of Douyin blogger "Datou Zezi" as the research object. By integrating the conversation theory and the symbolic interaction theory and using the content analysis method, the research aims to fill the gap in the relevant studies on public interaction of regional culture in the field of life.

2. Literature review

From the perspective of dialogic theory, the research focuses on the multi-pitched dialogic structure and dynamic relationships during the interaction process. Bakhtin's theory of dialogue emphasizes that the essence of communication lies in the equal dialogue and shared construction of meaning among the participants [2]. In the comment section of Douyin, this is manifested as a real-time, continuous, and constantly updated conversation flow in a social media comment area, that is, a structured conversation flow. Research indicates that interactive communication presents a dual-layer structure of "vertical dialogue between the public and bloggers" and "horizontal communication among the public", and its effectiveness highly depends on an equal and de-structured dialogue atmosphere [3, 4]. The level of public attention and participation are closely linked, and the timely responses of bloggers to comments are the key to stimulating interaction [5, 6]. These studies collectively point to the necessity of analyzing the comment section as a dynamic and continuous public dialogue space.

However, the existing research has two significant limitations: Firstly, the theoretical perspectives are separate. Most studies either focus on the structure and process of the dialogue, or on the symbols and carriers of the interaction, failing to effectively integrate and thus making it difficult to reveal how symbols are utilized, transmitted and reshaped in the dynamic dialogue flow [1, 3, 4]. Secondly, the existing research mostly focuses on accounts in broad fields such as government affairs and news, lacking in-depth analysis of comment sections like "Datou Zezi", which are formed by individual bloggers, have strong fan cohesion, and possess unique regional culture [7, 8]. Furthermore, although there have been studies beginning to focus on the new group-own relationship and evolutionary logic of digital communities, there is still a lack of research that combines this with specific and dynamic comment area conversation flows and symbolic practices to reveal the generation mechanism of specific fan community cultures [5]. For instance, studies on the spontaneously formed unique discourse systems within fan communities, topic evolution mechanisms, and interaction practices among different fan groups are still relatively scarce.

Therefore, this study aims to integrate the dialogic theory and the symbolic interaction theory, and view the comment section of "Datou Zezi" as the continuous practice of meaning negotiation carried out by community members through their exclusive circle discourse system and cultural symbols. By analyzing the interaction process of various voices and the way internal symbols are used, and the mutual influence mechanism, it attempts to reveal the dynamic interaction rules within such specific fan communities and the formation process of their unique circle culture, thereby making up for the shortcomings of existing research.

3. As the comment section of a multi-part dialogue: analysis of structure and process

The dialogue theory views communication as a multi-voice process of meaning construction. In the comment section of "Datou Zezi", this process was not carried out by a homogeneous audience, but was instead composed of a dynamic "dialogic field" formed by participants with different functions and in different relationship positions. Drawing on the observations made by Yuan Xiaochuan and Zhao Xin on the "vertical-horizontal" dual-layer dialogue structure of government-related Douyin, this study found that in the highly engaged personal blogger fan community of "Datou Zezi", the dialogue structure exhibits a distinct feature where the vertical relationship between "blogger and fan" serves as the core point, and the horizontal relationship between "fans" forms the absolute main axis. Based on how participants function and interact in conversations, their behavioral patterns can be grouped into several categories:

The first is the "Visual Capturer" This role contributes to the emotional interaction platform by using high-quality physical images as conversation starters [8]. These images deliver direct sensory stimulation and serve as tangible "evidence" that fuels discussion. The second is the "Knowledge Intermediary" These participants interpret and construct the meaning behind cultural symbols [1]. When communication breaks down because of insider jargon within a community, they step in to explain terms, acting as cultural translators and clarifying unwritten rules. Finally, the blogger "Datou Zezi" often plays the "Atmosphere Facilitator". He personally responds with humor--typically through exaggerated, witty slang or self-deprecating jokes [9]. This turns the usual top-down dynamic of posting and replying into a more horizontal, playful exchange between equals. Such a shift vividly reflects the "de-identification" trend in digital communities and the entertainment-driven spirit of comment sections [3]. Traditional hierarchies fade away, replaced by open and equal expression, which greatly boosts both the equality and liveliness of the dialogue.

These roles worked together to shape a pretty distinct interactive script. Take the visually-driven drama "Posting Photos-Emotional Resonance"--here's how it typically plays out: users share high-quality food photos, like that bowl of rice noodles that got 75,000 likes, which then triggers tons of praise. That buzz inspires a wave of other users to jump in, either posting their own pictures or chiming in with emotional reactions. What happened here basically confirmed the so-called "clue power" of social media comments. A comment containing strong visual symbols can effectively set the tone for subsequent interactions [5]. The typical manifestation of the "questioning - answering" knowledge transmission drama is as follows: Users input or ask internal jargon (such as "KKLFF"), and then senior users provide detailed explanations of the meanings in the sub-channels. This whole process isn't just about passing along information--it's actually a kind of polyphonic dialogue in action. Different voices come together to confirm, build on, and lock in the meaning of a given symbol. Together, they pull off something bigger: reproducing shared knowledge inside the community and drawing clear cultural boundaries. What we see in the comment section has this non-linear, recursive characteristic, which proves that dialogue is inherently "unfinished". Think of it like a tree: the video sets a core topic--say, "evaluating rice noodles"--as the main trunk. Then, the

specific symbols users throw in, like a photo of "foam box rice noodles", become the seeds that sprout new branches. The topic will then immediately shift to discussions about nostalgic memories or local knowledge. This transformation reflects the continuous renewal and growth of the meaning of digital communities over "long periods of time". In the actual interpretation dialogue, activating the inherent dialogic "response structure" also promotes the dynamic balance between the "definitive" and "rich and diverse" poles of the interpretive publicity [2]. Any participant may change the direction of the conversation by contributing a symbol with high resonance, and complete the value addition of meaning and the derivation of the topic through collective relay.

4. As a comment section of a shared symbol system: analysis of representational practices

The symbol system of this community is mainly composed of three types. The first is language symbols, which include Cantonese vocabulary and the internally created "secret language". A typical example is the abbreviation "KKLFF", which is a jargon that has been repeatedly used, explained and solidified within the specific conversations of this community. This is consistent with the research findings of Lv Yuxiang and Zhang Yang on the cultural symbols of short videos, namely that within the platform, unique symbol identifiers will be formed. Take language symbols, for instance: their "signifier" and "signified" line up almost perfectly. That kind of consistency helps users quickly build a sense of cultural identity. Then you've got visual symbols--mainly the "lantern rice rolls" and other food-related photos that users have freely shared. These pictures act as a full-blown symbolic system where the "signifier" and "signified" are clearly defined, making them a solid vehicle for storing and spreading culture. And finally, there are behavioral symbols. A classic example? "Posting photos for verification". When someone backs up their comment with an actual photo, that comment stops being just one person's opinion. Instead, it becomes a "cultural practice" - something open for everyone to see and engage with. This act itself is a powerful symbol, enhancing the users' sense of participation and is a direct manifestation of the network participatory culture. During the process of making paper cuttings, the participatory culture is fully exerted [1].

The meanings and functions of these symbols are activated in specific contexts. Firstly, the core function of symbols lies in identifying one's identity and consolidating emotions. Using "jargon" or dialect words proficiently and appropriately is an unspoken declaration of one's "in-group" status. This meets the users' need to construct their cultural identity through cultural symbols. In the new media era, the virtual space and the real space overlap, allowing traditional cultural symbols to also appear in the virtual space. This is the inheritance of culture and is also an important way for netizens to construct their identity in the virtual space [1]. It often strengthens the internal intimacy through humorous and satirical expression methods. Humor often stems from exaggerated, witty slang and self-deprecating jokes, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere [9]. Secondly, symbols serve the functions of conducting cultural interpretation and delineating boundaries for the outside world. When new users are confused by the internal symbols, the detailed explanations provided by the experienced members not only facilitate a friendly knowledge transfer, but also implicitly define the cognitive boundaries of the community. Finally, symbols serve as tools for meaning negotiation and authority construction. Regarding the debate over "what constitutes a good rice noodle roll", the final decision is often made by the most visually impactful "photos" that best align with the local aesthetic consensus. This vividly demonstrates the process in symbolic interaction theory where meaning is constantly negotiated and redefined within the "interpretive process". The meaning of things stems from social interaction and is processed and corrected within an interpretive process [7]. Moreover, this deep symbolic interaction is precisely the source of the strong social attributes of

short-video platforms. The "social" aspect based on "relationships" is an important direction for the construction of short-video platforms [8].

5. Dialogue and symbolic interconstruction: the generation of community rules and culture

In the comment section of "Datou Zezi", symbols are not merely passive carriers of meaning, instead, they are the key driving force that shapes the flow of the conversation. A highly-liked comment has a core symbol with strong "clue power", which can set the agenda for subsequent interactions. The disagreement in opinions in the comment section can serve as a clue to influence users' attention and participation behaviors [5]. More importantly, according to the symbolic interactionism theory, the meaning of things stems from social interaction and is processed and corrected within an interpretive framework [7]. A photo of a "failed rice noodle roll" does not merely signify "poor quality", but is jointly interpreted by users in the conversation as "an attempt with a story", thereby triggering a lively discussion about cooking techniques. The symbol here acts as the trigger for the conversation and the catalyst for generating meaning.

The meaning of symbols is not fixed, instead, it is constantly negotiated, revised and solidified through ongoing dialogue practices. For instance, the precise meaning and emotional connotation of the Cantonese words or abbreviations such as "KKLFF" are precisely clarified and enriched through multiple cycles of "use - inquiry - explanation" in communication. This collective interpretation process is a typical instance of symbolic interaction practice. Meanwhile, the "vertical" and "horizontal" dialogue structures observed in the study of government Douyin have undergone a qualitative change here [3]. In self-organized digital communities like "Datou Zezi", "horizontal dialogue" based on an equal relationship holds an absolute dominant position [10]. The negotiation of symbolic meanings is mainly accomplished among fans, which makes the symbols more flexible and more grassroots in nature.

From the successful inter-construction of symbols and dialogues, the community members gradually formed a set of inherent rules through observation and imitation. For instance, because the "sharing photos" behavior often leads to positive resonance and in-depth interaction, the principle of "showing pictures reveals the truth" has become a tacit rule. These rules are not explicitly stated but have been observed and emulated from the practices of those who receive high ratings and have successful interactions. They represent the "folk wisdom" of efficient participation in conversations. The continuous practice of symbolic communication and its inherent rules eventually coalesce into a perceivable and distinctive "circle culture". This is an intimate emotional identification based on the dietary culture of the Guangdong region. It is also a humorous self-mockery and nostalgic expression style. Ultimately, all of this has constructed an imagined community that "understands these symbols and is capable of participating in this dialogue". The emergence of this community culture vividly illustrates the evolutionary logic of digital communities as a new type of social connection. Its essence of unity is a cybernetic unity based on human-centeredness and mediated by numbers, which is a kind of physical technological connection [10]. That is, culture emerges from the micro-level, continuous symbolic interaction and dialogue practices, and in turn shapes every future interaction.

6. Conclusion

This study takes the comment section of Douyin blogger "Datou Zezi" as a case, integrating dialogue theory and symbolic interaction theory, and conceptualizes the comment section as a "symbolic dialogue field". The interaction in this field is presented as a multi-pitched network with

"fan - fan" horizontal communication as the absolute mainstay. The blogger, in the role of an "atmosphere guide", transforms the vertical responses into horizontal companion-like conversations, forming a dynamic dialogue flow driven by a collaborative effort of various types of participants such as "visual capturer" and "knowledge intermediary". The community completes identity assertion, boundary delineation and emotional connection through language symbols related to Cantonese or Guangdong cuisine, such as visual symbols like real food pictures, and behavioral symbols like "sharing pictures for verification". The meanings of these symbols are activated and negotiated within the specific communication chain. The dialogue provides a scenario and a screening mechanism, while symbols offer meaning carriers that can be recognized, contested and passed down. The two interact with each other in daily interactions, gradually solidifying internal rules such as "there is truth in the picture" and "using memes makes you one of us", and forming a circle culture and imagined community anchored by Guangdong cuisine memories.

This paper has established an "interaction-symbol co-construction" integrated analysis framework, breaking through the previous limitation of separating the dialogue structure from the symbolic practice in research. It can be applied to the study of the interactive cultural generation mechanism of similar individual bloggers - regional culture - high-loyalty fan communities, and also provides a methodological reference for the micro-pathway of digital community culture research. This study is a single-case analysis, focusing on the Guangfu regional culture sample. The external validity of the conclusion needs to be verified. The future scope can be expanded to include other regional cultural bloggers or cross-platform comparative studies. Moreover, quantitative methods can be introduced to conduct more extensive empirical tests on interaction patterns and the laws of symbol diffusion.

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