

New Media in Rural China

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Abstract

Far from being left behind, many rural residents have already integrated new media into their everyday life. Owing to the low cost, for majority of netizens in rural areas, mobile devices become the first choice to get online in China, mobile phone apps grow dramatically. We are in a new dynamic era of digital engagement and new media play an important role in different context. According to uses and gratifications theory, rural netizens use new media for a variety of reasons, such as entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, information, and empowerment. New media impacts rural development greatly, including education, employment and earnings, e-marketing, grassroots party committees' management.

Keywords

New Media; Rural China; Rural development.

1. Surge of New Media in Rural China

New media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on technological foundations of Web 2.0. The landscape of Chinese new media is undergoing fast-paced changes. Today some Chinese new media are even leading the global trend. Most new media applications provide easy-to-use interactive platform, which requires minimum IT skills. They provide a fool-type operation; their content production mechanisms are quite simple for users. This especially caters to rural netizen. For majority of Internet users, mobile devices become the first choice to get online in China. Consequently mobile phone apps grow dramatically.

According to the 42th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, by June 2018, the number of Chinese netizens reached 802 million, mobile Internet users reached 788million, and the percentage of Internet surfing via mobile was as high as 98.3% [1]. Chinese citizens living in rural areas are getting used to the internet. According to the China Internet Network Information Center, by the end of 2013, the number of rural residents who access the Internet via mobile phones had reached 149 million, accounting for nearly 85 percent of all rural Internet users, five percentage points higher than the ratio in cities.

As personal computers and especially mobile phones are no longer luxuries, rural residents can easily access the internet at home as well as city population. As a music short video app, Douyin caters to youngers' taste and hurried lifestyle. So it attracts dramatic users since its launch in late 2016. By June 12th, 2018, Douyin has attracted 166 million active users, with the majority aged below 30, announced by Beijing ByteDance Technology [2]. As an innovative mobile application, Douyin is installed on over 90% of smartphones and integrated into most young person's routines. Douyin has also reached rural areas. As personal computers and especially mobile phones are no longer luxuries, rural residents can easily access the internet at home. The younger generation of peasants is fond of using Douyin in their leisure time, listening to music, watching videos, commenting on Videos, uploading short video or forwarding video. With the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, many people are stuck at home and exploring cooking as a popular lifestyle. Some rural residents show their homemade delicacies online.

2. Entertainment in Leisure Time

We are in a new dynamic era of digital engagement and new media play an important role in different context. According to uses and gratifications theory, people use them for a variety of reasons, including entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, information, and empowerment. Far from being left behind, many rural Chinese people have already integrated social media into their everyday experience.

Short video is quite popular in rural areas. The video content is about entertainment, news, celebrities, friends and social interaction in general. Rural residents rely on short video apps for daily life including online sing, news reading, many other forms of entertainment. Douyin has become the most widely and frequently used social media in China and become popular with all the people of the country. All generations tends to spend their leisure time watching short videos on the app after work as a means of relaxing and relieving stress of work and life. At first, Douyin's main market is cities, especially first-and-second-tier cities at first. After the Spring Festival of 2018, Douyin app began to sink into the third and fourth tier cities. Then the firm changed its development strategy and has expanded further into rural markets.

3. E-learning and Diffusion of Traditional Culture

The use of new information and communication technologies in education, that's, e-learning is quite popular in digital society. Those in favour of ICT as an educational resource in an emerging learning society talk of the opportunities for learning offered by different forms of ICT. E-learning no longer applies merely to distance learning, but also to traditional courses that have incorporated electronic elements into the teaching and learning process. New Internet technologies can support completely different kinds of learning. Learning facilities are accessible everywhere and from different sources at any time. Due to the novel coronavirus epidemic, taking online classes has become a universal means for Chinese students to continue studying.

Cyber universities offer educational programs through distance learning over the Internet, thus tackle all the problems. The Web and the Internet have been integrated into classroom teaching. Teachers can make use of technology to enhance teaching. Enhancing classroom teaching is still by far the most prevalent use of the Web in higher education [3] Adults especially need to study new advanced knowledge and skills while working. Most of participation in adult education is for professional reasons. In order to adapt to change in the workplace and to fully participate in society, adults need to learn throughout their life. New methods of learning become popular among adult learners, such as, the usage of some kinds of information technology like personal computers, television and radio and so on.

With increasing use of new media applications, they grow to be a means of popularizing the traditional culture by ordinary netizen whether consciously or unconsciously and whether purposefully or not. The traditional culture contributed by netizen themselves and disseminated via new media is more easily welcomed and accepted by netizens. Social media platforms emphasize a more users-oriented experience and enable the sharing of knowledge. Sometimes we acquire useful information when we surfs aimlessly, consequently, passive acquisition is more frequent than active acquisition when we using social media. Douyin can be used as an useful and entertaining pathway for culture information acquisition. The application of new media at all levels of education shows that the world is changing quickly and people need, therefore, to be under a continuous education process.

4. Improvement of Employment and Earnings

What's more important, that's the impacts of new media coverage on non-farm employment and earnings in rural China. It proves that new media is a potential newly emerging pathway out of poverty for rural areas. Promotion of new media coverage can significantly enhance rural non-farm employment in China and ultimately increase earnings for rural residents.

Rural China is now becoming the birthplace for the next generation of social media influencers, generating revenues for and promoting the development of villages. Rural residents can introduce their locally-produced wares using new media. Local governments have encouraged farmers to promote sales of agricultural products. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, with people stuck at home, many viewers in China and around the world have turned to videos made by farmers, rural couples, and enterprising youngsters for a respite from their stressful lives. Qiaofu Jiumei, a college student with a degree in media studies, returned to her home province Guangxi and started the program by recording her everyday life before using short videos and social media platforms to sell products on the internet. By establishing an online communal sales portal for the fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally by other farmers from her village, Jiumei has been able to support her own family and make a fortune for her home village. [4] E-commerce helps alleviate poverty in rural areas of China.

5. Ecommerce in Rural Areas

The digital generation is and will continue to be an important consumption force. The population increase of rural internet users presents the opportunity to sell products to more Chinese citizens, which means more money for marketers. Besides the current gain, the latest development can increase e-commerce and m-commerce adoption in China's rural areas. As stated by South China Morning Post, 'Growth in China's under-regarded rural internet use has, in turn, pushed up online sales among these users by 21% to represent an actual market of \$109.6 billion (777.1 billion Yuan), well above the national growth rate.' In line with a biennial report from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 'By the end of 2017, around 47% of Chinese rural internet users had embraced mobile payments'. [5]

Douyin can be used as a marketing tool owing to its popularity among young digital generations. More and more companies are using Douyin app to promote and popularize their products and services, to collect positive and negative information about their products and services and to engage with their target audience.

To catalyze the adoption of ecommerce in China's rural areas, the country's largest ecommerce players made moves to develop the area. For instance, Alibaba's Rural Taobao initiative planned to improve 150,000 villages on the countryside. With the influence of Alibaba's Rural Taobao initiative and other platforms, the population of rural internet users increased in recent years.

6. Social Media Making Rural CPC Committees More Efficient

Communist Party of China (CPC) officials in the countryside are exploring ways to do a better job with the technology. Owing to low cost, smartphones are becoming more and more widespread in rural areas, and they are connecting people through social media in a way that was never before possible. CPC committees and Party members can stay in touch with each other via WeChat or QQ. Official accounts are used to consult Party members and also post job advertisements. Adopting mobile Internet technology is definitely one way these organizations can do their jobs better. [6] CPC officials can diffuse all kinds of information using new media. China's national center against telecom and internet fraud has opened its official accounts on five major Chinese social media platforms. The platforms include popular social networking

services WeChat and Weibo, as well as short-video platforms Douyin and Kuaishou. This will greatly enhance public awareness of fraudulent practices. [7]

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, many rural residents have already integrated new media into their everyday life. New media play an important role in different context. Rural residents use new media for entertainment, social interaction, personal identity, information, and empowerment. New media impacts rural development greatly, including education, employment and earnings, e-marketing, grassroots party committees' management. New media is not only kind of media rural residents use, but also, essential part of rural residents' ordinary life, and kind of their lifestyles.

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