Covering Covid-19 Pandemic on Short Video Platforms in China: A Content Analysis of Douyin Accounts of *People's Daily* and *China Daily*

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ABSTRACT

As a new form of social media, short videos have been deeply seated in Chinese life. In order to expand their influence, China's mainstream media also opened accounts on short video platforms, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. They use short video platforms to report news, which play a key role in guiding public opinion and stabilising people's hearts. Based on the pandemic coverage of two of China's representative media, *People's Daily* and *China Daily* on Douyin platform, content analysis method is used to analyse the reporting frequency, video length, reporting content, reporting tendency, and user engagement, and compare the similarities and differences between the two media in the above five aspects. It was found that in terms of reporting frequency, the development trend of the two media is different, but they post roughly the same number of videos per day on average, and the number of videos released during the pandemic is higher than usual. In terms of video length, most of the videos of the two media are produced in a duration of one minute. *China Daily* produced more long videos than *People's Daily*. In terms of the reporting content, the two media are involved in 11 constructed categories, but the top four categories are different because of the different position. About the reporting tendency, *People's Daily* has strong subjective emotion, and *China Daily* reported more neutral news. As for user engagement, *People's Daily* did better in likes, comments and shares, although both posted more likes, comments and shares than usual during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Douyin, short video coverage, People's Daily, China Daily, COVID-19.*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak at the end of 2019 has become a global public health event, inflicting huge losses on people and society and profoundly affecting the course of human society. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as cases and deaths surge around the world, there is an urgent need for COVID-19 knowledge, and it is important to provide the public with the information they need to respond to the pandemic, especially for the news outlets. As social media is currently a very popular and easy-to-adopt communication carrier, many news media outlets have widely used social media to convey health information (Conrad et al., 2020). Among them, news reports with short video is a new important way, as short video news has the characteristics of fast transmission, convenient production, three-dimensional information presentation and wide coverage.

Douyin, known as TikTok internationally, is a good example. Douyin App is a social software where users can select songs and pair them with short videos to form their own compositions, then upload them to share their life. At present, Douyin is one of the most popular social media platforms in China. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic causes people's offline needs to shift massively online, under the lockdown, people are spending more and more time on mobile devices, finding new recreational activities and ways to stay connected (Mohsin & Skills, 2021), and the downloads of short videos such as TikTok surge (Li, Guan,

Hammond & Berrey, 2021). The rapid expansion of Douyin provides a unique opportunity for news agencies to inform and educate people about COVID-19 information.

In China, Douyin App had more than 600 million daily active users in 2020, and it has more than 400 million video searches a day (Quest Mobile, 2022). News outlets, meanwhile, see its potential, and they join this platform. As data shows, as of December 2020, 1,334 news outlets opened accounts on Douyin (Douyin Data Report, 2021), viewing it as a new platform for information dissemination. These media include People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, CCTV News and other mainstream media of China. They make use of their strong influence and use short video platforms to spread discourse and guide public opinion. Therefore, it is worth studying how traditional mass media spread information with the help of short video platforms.

Problem Statement

In the early stage of COVID-19 pandemic, fake news is prevalent on China's major short video platforms, it is challenging to tell the truth from the fake online information, and public opinion is complex (Luo, 2021). In order to lessen their worry, people must get reliable information from authoritative and professional channels. Research shows that four-fifths of short video information related to COVID-19 are shared by users from professional news organisations (Marchal, Au & Howard, 2020). However, although some scholars have studied mass media news reports on COVID-19 pandemic, their research interests are primarily focused on written (Krawczyk et al., 2021; Basch, Kecojevic & Wagner, 2020; Gandasari & Dwidienawati, 2020) and TV news report (Basch et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Apuke & Omar, 2021), very few scholars pay attention to news coverage on short video platforms.

In addition, among the studies on the comparative analysis, scholars compare coverage of COVID-19 in different media forms (Mellado et al., 2021) and mainstream news media coverage of COVID-19 in different countries (Abbas, 2020; Amann, Sleigh & Vayena, 2021), however, there is little work on comparative analysis of two different authoritative media on short video news reports. In China, short video platforms have become an important channel for media to release news. Therefore, it is very important to carry out research on news coverage based on short video platforms.

Significance of Study

One of the traits of the modern media environment is the presentation of information through short video platforms (Luo, 2021). Therefore, it is more crucial than ever for China's mainstream media to grab the public's attention, master the right of discourse, and alter the communication patterns. *People's Daily* and *China Daily* aggressively created short video news reports with their authority and professionalism in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling audiences to get crucial information at sporadic moments and answering their demands. The goal of this paper is to establish specific guidelines for the production and dissemination of short video news by mainstream media. It does this by using Douyin short videos from *People's Daily* and *China Daily* as examples to study. Additionally, the empirical research on the two mainstream media's short video news reports is beneficial for elucidating their design principles, cutting-edge formats, and current issues. It also helps to raise the mainstream media's level of operational efficiency in the short video news space. At the same time, it is also conducive to the mainstream media to spread rigorous pandemic information

to the public at the fastest speed, and improve the handling level and public opinion guidance ability in the case of sudden public health events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the development of new media technologies, professional media organisations are facing the latest challenges (Vartanova & Gladkova, 2021). Understanding the potential and reach of a popular short video platform like TikTok is also an important factor for any media channel in the modern world (Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021).

Currently, there are several research themes involving media outlets and social media. Some focus on studying adaptation to social media (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019; Lischka, 2021; Geni, Briandana & Umarella, 2021; Argila, 2019), others on the role of news outlets in social media (Pennycook & Rand, 2019; Andrews et al, 2016; Bora et al., 2018), news consumption (Shearer & Grieco, 2019; Marchal, Au & Howard, 2020; Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021), and interaction between news outlets and their audience (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018; Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2019; Larsson, 2018). Direct research of official media accounts on short videos is also starting to appear, but the number of these studies so far is limited.

The first theme of past research on short video coverage is adaptation to social media. Having conducted content analysis of 19 verified news media, Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2020) discovered different adaptation techniques which make TikTok different from other social networks and concluded that TikTok is the place for indirect and incidental consumption of news. Another scholar, according to qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys of social media editors in Finland and Switzerland, Lischka (2021) revealed that social media editors prioritise emotional and surprising story elements in their posts in accordance with user preferences and the logic of the News Feed algorithm. However, they strive for a 'good mix' of news that adheres to Facebook logic and professional journalism standards. Geni, Briandana and Umarella (2021) employed in-depth interviews and observations to examine the digital strategy of a traditional mass media outlet during the pandemic. The results showed Kompas TV adapted to the current advancement and digital media technology. Argila (2019) used empirical research to analyse videos on well-known social platforms and found that the most popular videos are generally less than four minutes long.

In relation to news outlets, the second theme is the role of news outlets in social media. Pennycook and Rand (2019) examined audience trust in three types of news sources, and the results showed that information from mainstream news organisations is more likely to be trusted. Similarly, through the WestJet hijacking case, Andrews et al. (2016) reveals the positive role of mainstream media in rumour spreading and correction. Bora et al. (2018) quantified 110 videos on YouTube about the Zika virus, and concluded that videos from government or news outlets are more authoritative. They also suggest that short video accounts publishing health information should be verified. The above research results confirm that professional media organisations play a role in clarifying rumours, guiding public opinion and releasing authoritative information in social media, especially in major crisis events.

The third theme is news consumption. Current studies prove that the consumption of news on social networks is increasing (Shearer & Grieco, 2019), also audiences are more willing to consume news on short video news published by mainstream media (Guo, 2020), especially in the major emergency. Marchal, Au and Howard (2020) argue that social media is changing the way people get COVID-19 news and information, using an analysis of 320

COVID-19 related videos on YouTube to find: four out of five COVID-19 related news shared by users came from professional news organisations. According to the Digital News Report (2020) released by Reuters and Oxford University, the outbreak of COVID-19 has seen a big increase in news consumption in mainstream media, along with online search and social media use. Among them, the browsing behaviour of social media platforms mainly focuses on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and so on. Research results of scholars show that professional news outlets Chobanyan and Nikolskaya (2021) analyse two accounts of traditional TV news on TikTok: NBC News and CBS News. The results showed that while younger users stressed the importance of the brevity and entertaining aspects of any potential TV news video on TikTok, the serious and least entertaining videos were also able to garner millions of likes and views.

The fifth theme is the interaction between news outlets and their audience. Berger and Milkman (2012) analysed the psychological features of the most shared stories via email in *New York Times*, the results showed that stories that succeeded in creating strong emotions - arousal, either positive (happy) or negative (angry) – shared more than stories that were considered as less emotional. Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) hold the same view. By conducting qualitative content analysis and comparing data from four Norwegian media outlets, they found that emotional stories and provocative commentary articles were very common among the most shared articles in the sample. Also, Bentivegna and Marchetti (2019) analysed news offerings and associated audience engagement on Facebook from four newspapers in Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom over a six-month period. The results showed that users are more likely to interact with news that touches on their emotions. Adopting a comparative approach, Larsson (2018) analysed the data from Facebook and Instagram of Norwegian media outlets. The results show that the trend of viewers opting for "lighter" or less demanding modes of online news content interaction is further strengthened, especially on Instagram.

In conclusion, literature on short video coverage reveals some salient themes which are adaptation to social media, the role of news outlets in social media, news consumption, interaction between news outlets and their audience. However, there is little working on the official media accounts on short video platforms. Although Vázquez-Herrero et al. (2020) studied official media accounts on TikTok from the perspective of TikTok logic, and Chobanyan and Nikolskaya (2021) believed users are more willing to consume serious news published by media organisations through short video platforms, the content analysis of short video coverage from media outlets are still in its infancy. In addition, these themes reflect the significance of further research on short video coverage outside of the Western hemisphere since the literature also reveals the dearth of research on short video coverage in Chinese context.

The purpose of this research is to fill in the research gap by exploring the reporting content of news outlets on short video platforms from five themes: reporting frequency, video length, reporting content, reporting tendency and user engagement. This study, based on content analysis of mainstream Chinese news media publications on Douyin, raises the following questions:

(1) What are the features of the videos about COVID-19 pandemic that were released by *People's Daily* and *China Daily* on Douyin, including reporting frequency, video length, reporting contents, reporting tendency, and user engagement?

(2) What are the similarities and differences of reporting frequency, video length, reporting contents, reporting tendency and and user engagement between *People's Daily* and *China Daily*？

METHODOLOGY

A content analysis is employed for this study. Content analysis is a research method that provides an objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content (Berelson, 1952). When conducting content analysis, the researcher must eliminate personal subjectivity and seek out universal values in the materials already in existence; they must view all pertinent materials as an organic whole and conduct a thorough and methodical study of the materials; and they must use mathematical statistics to analyse the materials under study quantitatively. This study analyses and compares the short video coverage about COVID-19 of *People's Daily* and *China Daily* on Douyin platform, and identifies their similarities and differences.

Sampling

All short videos about COVID-19 published by *People's Daily* and *China Daily* on Douyin from January 20 to February 20, 2020 are selected. A total of 217 videos about the pandemic from People's Daily and 169 videos from *China Daily* are obtained through data cleaning, which constituted statistical samples.

a. Media Selection

Two official news outlets accounts of Douyin are selected, People's Daily and China Daily. The *People's Daily* is the most influential media in China. By the end of 2021, the number of followers had reached 150 million, making it the account with the largest number of Douyin followers. Almost every video published by *People's Daily* received one million likes. *China Daily* is China's national English daily. During the COVID-19 pandemic in China in 2020, *China Daily* was one of the top 10 media accounts on Douyin that were most diligent in posting videos about the pandemic. Therefore, *People's Daily* and *China Daily* are representatives of China's official media, hence, this study selected the two news outlets. Table 1 shows the information of the two accounts.

Table 1: Douyin accounts of *People's Daily* and *China Daily*

Account	First post	Organisation	Followers	Total likes
People's Daily	10/09/18	*People's Daily*	150 million	8.5 billion
China Daily	18/03/21	*China Daily*	35.8 million	1.4 billion

b. Period

The monitoring of the content published on the Douyin accounts of *People's Daily* and *China Daily* from Jan 15 to Jan 19 revealed a very small number of articles about pneumonia. The National Health Commission affirmed that COVID-19 must be passed from person to person on January 20, 2020. Since that time, COVID-19 has received a lot of media attention. Because of this, the report's information from January 20 to February 20 has some reference value.

Categories

Using the LDA function of R package "topicmodels" (Grün & Hornik, 2011), eleven categories are computed for each account's short video posts, and formed a formal list of coded categories and their operational definitions.

Table 2: The categories of this study.

Themes	Categories	Operational Definition	Code
Reporting Content	Latest news	Updates on the cases of COVID-19, the pandemic's present state, public notice of cases, emergency spread, notification of materials in low supply, and notification of actions obstructing the control of the epidemic.	1
	Actions	Reports on medical personnel, police, soldiers and other government departments, donations, and the pandemic-fighting efforts of the patients.	2
	Government decision-making	Announcements of personnel changes, the deployment of pandemic prevention and control efforts, the adoption of pertinent legislation and regulations issued by the government, etc.	3
	Scientific payoffs	Experts and academicians on virus research, drug research and development, development trend forecast and other related scientific research and related results.	4
	Clarify rumours	State the facts and refute the rumours.	5
	Protection Guidance	Popularising pandemic related knowledge and protection knowledge	6
	International concern	International public's worry over the disease, international reportage on the pandemic, and international figures.	7
	Encouragement	Blessing, encouragement and prayer for the patients and people in the affected areas.	8
	Appealing	Call for action in favour of pandemic prevention	9
	Life influence	Influence on daily life, work, study, entertainment and so on	10
	Appreciation	Praise doctors and nurses on the front lines of pandemic prevention	11
Reporting Tendency	neutrality	Give an objective description of the pandemic.	NE
	positive	They praised the epidemic prevention work, praised prominent figures and expressed optimistic and positive attitudes.	P
	negative	Reports on adverse actions and phenomena in pandemic prevention and control, denigrating China's epidemic prevention and control work, and racial discrimination	N

Coding

Students majoring in journalism and communication who are proficient in content analysis are invited to act as coders to encode the content of the samples one by one and assign corresponding codes. For questionable codes, discuss them separately to determine item attribution.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
This section highlights the findings and interpretations of the research.

Reporting Frequency
Figure 1 reflects the reporting frequency of the two media, and their similarities and differences. A total of 386 videos about the pandemic are analysed over the coding period. Of the videos, 217 are from the Douyin account of *People's Daily*, and 169 are obtained from the Douyin account of *China Daily*.
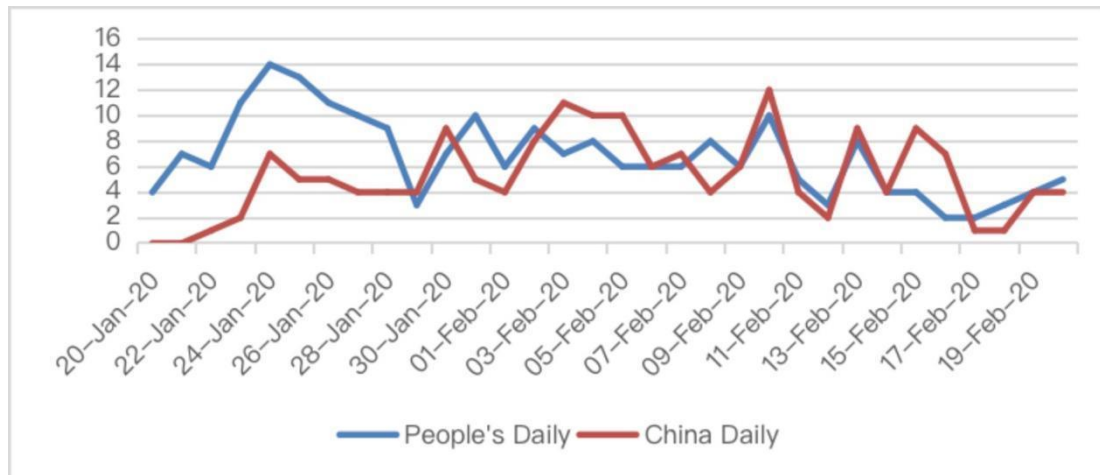

Figure 1: The reporting frequency of COVID-19

a. Similarities
People's Daily posted 217 short videos on the Douyin platform during the time period, compared to *China Daily*'s 169; based on the average number of videos posted, the two accounts post roughly the same number of videos per day, with *People's Daily* posting 6.78 and *China Daily* posting 5.28; *People's Daily* has a daily maximum of 14, whereas *China Daily* has 12. The data above shows that the frequency of the two media reports is nearly equal. This demonstrates the seriousness of the pandemic and the gravity of the situation by showing that during the start of the pandemic in China, specifically on January 20, 2020, medical specialists confirmed human-to-human transmission of COVID-19. The government requested that pertinent reports on the pandemic be published as quickly as possible, and China's official media complied, providing reassurance. Thus, the two media outlets are comparable in terms of the quantity of videos posted.

b. Differences
Figure 1 depicts the reporting frequency of *People's Daily*, which increased quickly in the beginning and peaked on January 25 before fluctuating in the days that followed. Everyone was taken off guard by the unexpected COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, beginning on January 20 and culminating around January 25, COVID-19-related reports on People's Daily's Douyin account sprang up quickly. The public's fear has somewhat subsided with the widespread dissemination of information on pandemic prevention, and the number of releases has gradually dropped and stabilised, although there are still some fluctuations because of the dynamic shifts in the pandemic condition.

However, *China Daily* had a gradual, erratic growth in the beginning until reaching its high on February 10 and then beginning to decrease. This is due to *China Daily*'s consistent global focus. The number of its publications grew during the early stages of the pandemic, though not as swiftly as the *People's Daily*. As the pandemic spread throughout China, it attracted interest from around the world, which caused *China Daily*'s publication frequency to gradually rise until February 10. Following that, it changed as the pandemic evolved.

Video Length

The length of the two accounts' videos is displayed in Table 3. One-minute videos were among them, and 213 of them were published by *People's Daily* and 163 by *China Daily*. It's important to note that the examples only contain, respectively, 4 and 6, nearly insignificant amounts, of longer videos. The longest video is from *People's Daily* and is 3 minutes and 31 seconds long. The shortest video is from *China Daily* and is 8 minutes and 24 seconds long. *People's Daily* is 17.6 seconds lengthy on average, while *China Daily* is substantially longer at 3 minutes, 27.1 seconds.

Table 2: Video length

Official Accounts	Average Length (Within 1 minute)	The longest	The shortest	The number of video more than a minute	The number of video within a minute
People's Daily	17.6 seconds	3 minutes and 31 seconds	5 seconds	4	213
China Daily	3 minutes and 27.1 seconds	8 minutes and 24 seconds	5 seconds	6	163

a.   Similarities

As can be seen from Table 2, almost all videos on both accounts are kept under a minute. The fact that the shortest video in both cases is 5 seconds, in keeping with the concise and sharp style of Douyin's short videos, is another resemblance.

Videos from Douyin are appropriate for casual and mobile watching. Videos typically last between 15 seconds and 5 minutes, but TikTok, the international equivalent, has a 15-second to 3-minute time limit. Videos can provide users with a richer visual experience and a more vivid expression than text and photos can, which can help them understand the information that their producers want to get across to the audience more clearly and vividly. Due to time constraints, short videos frequently just present the essential information. This matches users' fragmented reading habits and cuts down on the time commitment required for participation.

One of the main principles of short videos is that they should never exceed 15 seconds. If the content does not hook viewers in the first three seconds of the video, it will never succeed in doing so. Long videos are not recommended by Douyin, and it is highly unlikely that long videos will draw viewers. Instead, short videos should be produced to draw viewers. The two accounts typically condense health information inside one minute, so media accounts should also adjust to the survival of short video platforms.

b.   Differences

While *People's Daily* only released four videos longer than a minute, *China Daily* published six of them. Additionally, *China Daily*'s longest video is 8 minutes and 24 seconds, compared to 3 minutes and 31 seconds for *People's Daily*. The most likely explanation is that *China Daily* published two in-depth movies, the longest of which, clocking in at 6 minutes 50 seconds, and 8 minutes 24 seconds, respectively, tells the stories of volunteers and emergency vehicle drivers battling the pandemic in Wuhan. Throughout this time, the *People's Daily* did not publish such in-depth reports. In its longest movie, which lasts 3 minutes and 31 seconds, every Chinese person is praised for their contributions throughout the pandemic.

Reporting Content

Figure 2 shows the categories of reporting contents. 11 categories are summarised among the samples. There are "Actions", "Latest news", "Government decision-making", "Scientific payoffs", "Clarify rumours", "Protection Guidance", "International concern", "Appealing", "Encouragement", "Life influence" and "Appreciation".
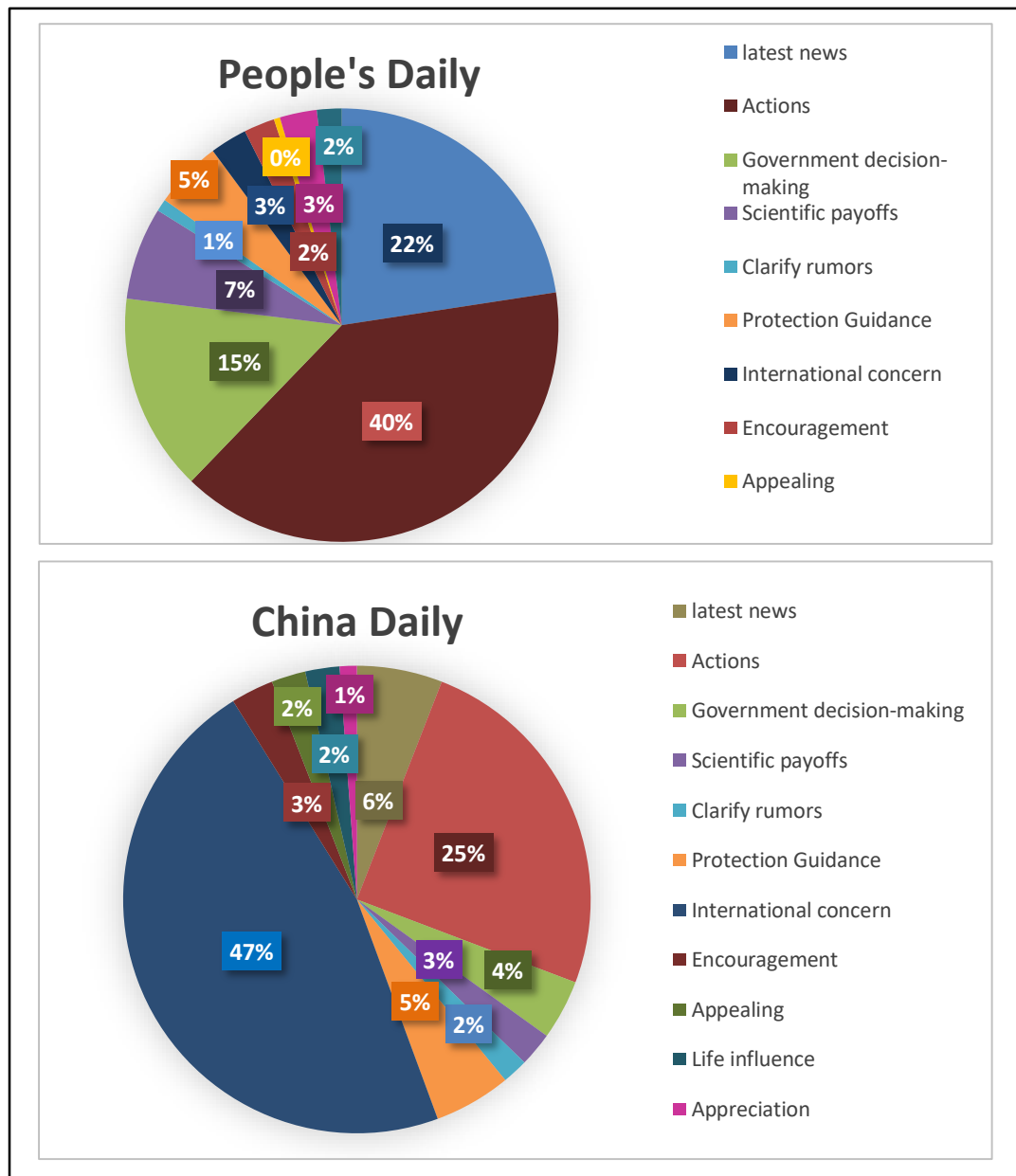
Figure 2: The categories of reporting contents

a. Similarities

The two accounts each cover 11 different reporting content categories, as shown in Figure 2. Both media outlets place the most emphasis on "Actions" and "Latest news" among them, and both media outlets prioritise reporting on these topics. It is obvious that these two media make use of the Douyin platform to increase the volume of crucial information dissemination. The prompt notice of the government and prompt response to the pandemic are factors in the low proportion of "Clarifying rumours" and "Appealing." The official status of the two media sources is inextricably linked to the very modest number of reports on "Life impact." On the whole, the two media covered as many as 11 categories of news content in their short video reports, which accurately mirrored the pandemic's storylines.

b.   Differences

However, there are significant variations in how reporting content is distributed. According to *People's Daily*, the top four categories are "Actions," "Latest news," "Governments decision-making," and "Scientific payoffs," with respective shares of 40%, 22%, 15%, and 7%. Less than 5% of content is made up of the other categories. "International Concern" (47%), "Actions on Pandemic" (25%), "Latest News on Pandemic" (6%) and "Guidance" (5%), which are the top four categories in *China Daily*, are all fewer than 5%.

People's Daily's short video coverage focuses primarily on the government agencies and medical personnel battling the outbreak. Consequently, "Actions" topped the list with 40%, followed by "Latest news" with 22%. However, the majority of *China Daily*'s video coverage focused on how the world perceived the pandemic in China, how the world reacted to it, and how the Chinese people handled it. As we can see, *China Daily* did more than only inform the Chinese people about the pandemic's global worry; it also displayed the resilience of the Chinese people and their successes in preventing and controlling it. Therefore, "international concern" and "action" have the highest percentages.

Reporting Tendency

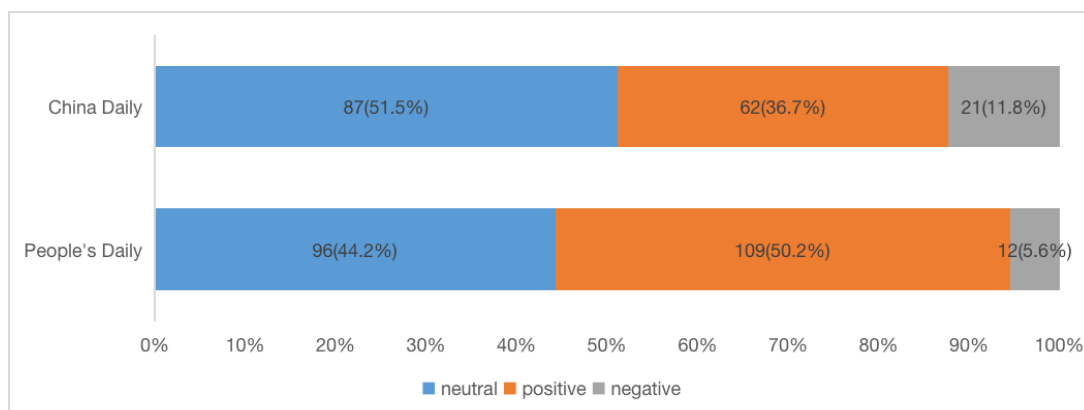Figure 3 shows the reporting tendencies of the two Douyin accounts.

Figure 3: The reporting tendencies of the two accounts

According to Figure 3, the percentage of positive reports in *People's Daily* is 50.2%, while the percentages of neutral and negative reports are, respectively, 44.2% and 5.6%. In *China Daily*, there are 11.8% fewer negative stories than positive ones, 36.7% more positive reports, and 51.5% more neutral news.

a.   Similarities

The two media primarily cover positive and neutral news, with negative news making up the least amount of coverage. The neutral reports, which include "International Concern," "Latest News," "Government Decision-Making," "Scientific Payoffs," and "International Concern," work to inform the public about the epidemic in a timely, accurate, open, and transparent manner while avoiding spreading panic. Positive coverage is classified as "activity," "praise," and "encouragement," with a focus on highlighting the commitment of the public sector and the medical community as well as other people's selfless deeds. This positive social energy helps to transform the audience's negative mindset. The negative reports primarily focus on unlawful activities, negligence of duty, and disrespecting China by using the pandemic. The

two media outlets loudly denounced and attacked the aforementioned behaviour while they were reporting it.

b. Differences

In contrast to *China Daily*, which has more positive news than neutral news, *People's Daily* has the opposite ratio. *People's Daily*, which caters to the Chinese market, emphasises "action" and has a penchant for expressing humanistic and subjective emotions. On the other hand, *China Daily* is more interested in international news, therefore its reporting is more likely to be objective.

User Engagement

Douyin users' engagement can be measured by the number of likes, comments and shares (Chen et al., 2021). Table 4 and table 5 show the number of likes, comments and shares of People's Daily and China Daily during the statistical period.

In terms of the People's *Daily* account on Douyin, more than 659 million people gave likes, with a maximum of 22.6 million and a minimum of 208 thousand, on average receiving more than 3 million likes. The number of comments ranges from 50 at the highest point to 9.22 million at the lowest, with 147.5 thousand being the average. The mean value of shares was 102.9 thousand, with maximum and minimum values of 1488 and 1.65 million, respectively.

Table 4: The number of likes, comments and shares of People's Daily

Indicators	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Number of likes	659,618,000	208,000	26,282,000	3,039,714
Number of comments	31,857,740	50	9,222,000	147,490
Number of shares	22,327,000	1488	1,652,000	102,889

Table 5: The number of likes, comments and shares of China Daily

Indicators	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Number of likes	58,920,981	87	10,081,000	348,645
Number of comments	1,647,587	19	439,000	9,692
Number of shares	945,678	37	130,000	5,563

a. Similarities

Data indicate that during the pandemic, the two accounts garnered a lot of attention. A large number of likes suggests that users enjoy watching short films, while comments can inform the public about an event and shares suggest a higher degree of approval. In a nutshell, short video platforms allow traditional media to reach the new media's already-existing audience. The Douyin platform's convenience, meanwhile, increases engagement online and audience numbers, increasing the communication influence of traditional mainstream media.

b. Differences

The numbers of likes, comments, and shares for *China Daily* are significantly lower than those for *People's Daily* in terms of total number, average, maximum, and minimum, as shown in Table 3 and 4.

DISCUSSION

The commentary based on the findings of the data analysis is highlighted in this part. First off, it is clear that the *People's Daily* and *China Daily* Douyin accounts respond quickly to major public health emergencies. The number and frequency of reports increased quickly over a short period of time, which is crucial for disseminating accurate information, influencing public opinion, and upholding social stability. This is parallel with previous studies on the role of mainstream media in social media (Andrews et al., 2016.). For example, media outlets should actively release authoritative news in the face of crisis, stop the spread of rumours in time, and guide public opinion to keep in the right direction (Andrews et al., 2016).

The research of scholars shows that news organisations are actively integrating into the short video platform (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2020; Lischka, 2021; Argila, 2019). The analysis of video duration in this study verifies the positive response of media organisations to new media operation rules. The results are also consistent with previous studies such as the results of Vázquez-Herrero' research, which is that the video duration published on TikTok by news outlets was only 22 seconds.

Moreover, the results of the analysis of the report content and reporting tendency confirm the previous research results, that is, the content with strong emotion and inflammatory is easy to attract the audience (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018; Bentivegna & Marchetti , 2019; Larsson, 2018). The positive stories in the *People's Daily* and *China Daily* show content with emotion, especially short videos with themes of "action," "praise," and "encouragement. As analysed by Bentivegna and Marchetti (2019), users are more likely to interact with news that touches on their emotions.

Then, the numerous comments, likes, and shares of the COVID-19 video reports shared by the two Douyin accounts demonstrate that the news media continues to serve as a trustworthy source of information for viewers during major crises (Garden & David, 2018, Marchal, Au, & Howard, 2020), as well as the fact that even serious and depressing videos can garner millions of views and likes (Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021). The ambition of traditional media organisations to engage with its users is also reflected in these measures of engagement (likes, comments, and shares). This further demonstrates how news organisations have adapted to new media (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2020; Argila, 2019).

Relating to the second question, first, regarding the two examined news outlets, *People's Daily* emerges as the dominating Douyin account for news coverage in Chinese context. Such a result confirms findings from Chinese scholars, further strengthening the dominance of *People's Daily* over other Chinese mainstream as a major publisher for major crisis events (e.g. Lu & Ning, 2020). Also, Douyin is the Chinese version of TikTok, which is predominantly Chinese. As a result, *China Daily*'s Douyin account is far less influential than *People's Daily*, this is reflected in the degree of user engagement (likes, comments and shares).

This study also finds a difference relating to the categories of reporting content on the two accounts. The *People's Daily*'s most popular short video are about the Chinese government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, referring to "Actions", "Latest news", "Government's decision-making", while *China Daily* focused on the international response to the pandemic. This difference still confirms the different nature of the two media, such as research of Gao and Dong (2007), *People's Daily* is China's most authoritative comprehensive media with the largest circulation. It is highly political. *China Daily* is the most authoritative

English language media in China and the most frequently reproduced media by western media (Gao & Dong, 2007).

IMPLICATION

In China nowadays, the popularity of short videos is rising. Many mainstream media outlets began their layout in short video platforms several years ago in light of this circumstance, and they steadily deepened and stereotyped. Based on the examination of COVID-19 short video coverage from *People's Daily* and *China Daily*, it plays a big role in the emergency propaganda system of the Convid-19 pandemic and makes a certain impact.

First of all, the stability and security of information may be guaranteed by combining the Douyin platform with traditional media outlets. Short videos on Covid-19 that are published by professional media outlets for the Douyin platform offer rich material while raising the platform's level of safety. Fake news is prevalent on the platform as a result of the dearth of professional journalism, which has prompted criticism of Douyin. Traditional media's short video programming, though, clearly has advantages in terms of authority and dependability. Before the release, they thoroughly examined the text, image, voice, and video content as well as other discourse symbols and films. This improved the platform's overall safety. Direct rivalry between the two has evolved into a cooperative symbiosis, which is a striking example of platform integration on both sides.

Second, audiences can gain a global awareness of the pandemic's progression through various media's features. Through *China Daily* and *People's Daily*, audiences can learn about the pandemic's situation in China and the rest of the world, respectively. Through the Douyin accounts of the two, the joint integration of release and differentiated and accurate dissemination of information can achieve full coverage of the audience's public opinion information, while avoiding serious information homogenisation.

LIMITATIONS

China's traditional mainstream media have accumulated rich experience in reporting public health events, showing remarkable results, but there are also some deficiencies.

First of all, information is missing during the incubation period of the virus. According to a study by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 104 infections are likely to occur in Wuhan before December 31, 2019, and 5,417 between January 11 and 20, 2020, with a complete outbreak occurring in the last 10 days of January. However, during the incubation period of the epidemic, *People's Daily*'s new media reported only a few COVID-19 cases, leaving it in a state of aphasia without information.

In addition, front-line workers are unfairly reported. In the coverage of the pandemic, front-line workers, especially medical workers, have taken up a large proportion of the news coverage. Reports reflecting the dedication of front-line workers to "give up their small homes for everyone" can stimulate the national spirit and cohesion of the public in the fight against the pandemic, but it is also necessary to prevent over-reporting or over-hyping. The coverage of frontline workers can not only reflect their "dedication", but also enhance the audience's confidence in the pandemic prevention campaign by affirming their professionalism.

CONCLUSION

Douyin is an emerging communication tool that traditional mainstream media can use to deliver authoritative, factual news to the public, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The content analysis of 386 Covid-19 videos shows that *People's Daily* and *China Daily* are able to actively embrace emerging media to report news, and actively adapt to the transmission mode of short video platforms. As for the reporting frequency, although the frequency of reports is different, the number of videos released by the two mainstream media is almost the same, which shows that traditional media attach great importance to new media. About the video length, the majority of videos are less than 1 minute, which are well adapted to the dissemination characteristics of Douyin platform and attract a large number of followers, but they do release rare videos longer than a minute for feature stories about resistance to disease to keep the news professional. In terms of reporting content and tendency, due to the different positioning of the media, the focus of their reports is also different. *People's Daily* released more videos of how Chinese people are coping with the pandemic, with mostly positive coverage. *China Daily*, on the other hand, tends to be more objective and neutral with its international concerns. At the same time, both media cover all categories of coding, as well as coverage of negative content, such as officials' dereliction of duty, illegal crimes taking advantage of the pandemic, and racial discrimination against Chinese in the international community. In addition, this study also analysed user engagement. Data shows that the number of likes, comments and shares on traditional media's Douyin accounts increased to varying degrees during the pandemic, although *People's Daily* attracts more attention. This shows that traditional media use new media to expand their influence.

However, there are some limitations. For example, in the early stage of the pandemic, the absence of mainstream media affected the prevention and control of the epidemic to some extent. Also, mainstream media coverage of health workers overemphasised their dedication and ignored their professionalism.

In a word, in China, traditional mainstream media can guide public opinion and stabilise people's hearts by reporting the pandemic through Douyin because the authority of mainstream media helps users to reduce their uncertainty as they receive information related to Covid-19 and boost their confidence during this challenging time. Therefore, traditional media outlets should be aware of the opportunities of short videos in health communication.

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