A Reflection of Motivations via TikTok (Douyin) and Instagram Story:
A Content Analysis and Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Gen Z Users

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the motivations that reflected from short videos. The samples were selected the 400 most liked TikTok (Douyin) videos and the 400 most latest Instagram stories from the 100 Thai and the 100 Chinese Generation Z (Gen Z) who were born between 1996-2005. This research used quantitative content analysis, and storytelling elements including visuals, sound, character, scenes, and plot to deal with the 800 short videos for comparing the specific similar and different motivations of Thai and Chinese Gen Z. The findings showed that the motivation of the 100 Chinese Gen Z was mainly to show pretty image by makeup and filter on Douyin and Instagram Story, while the motivation of the 100 Thai Gen Z was mainly to share real image and authentic life on TikTok and Instagram Story.

Keywords: Short video app, Gen Z, motivation

Introduction

Gen Z who born between 1996-2005 are important populations such a part of the society, they have been active on TikTok (Douyin) and Instagram Story (Muliadi, 2020). TikTok videos and Instagram Stories were diverse between Thai and Chinese Gen Z, because of the differences of cultural, political, and social factors (YuguoNet, 2020). These short videos were the stories that the narrative accounts of an event or a sequence of events (Frog Leaps,

2013), and they are consisted by different storytelling elements (Aditya, 2014). As stories, these short videos also showed different motivations of the Gen Z. Through analyzing the storytelling elements in these short videos, and based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (Maslow, 1970), the researcher explored motivations reflected from the short videos.

According to Fu, Wu, and Cho (2016), people shared video for self-promotion, and helped the company. Moreover, Bossen, Christina, Kottasz, and Rita (2020) pointed out that users being active in producing videos were significantly more likely for self-identity creation and fame-seeking desires. In addition to, Omar and Wang (2020) found that people participated in TikTok to express themselves, interact with others, and escape from day to day pressure.

Objective

The research objectives were to compare the motivations between the Thai and Chinese Gen Z users reflected on TikTok (Douyin), and Instagram Story.

Scope of research

TikTok called Douyin in China has been popular since 2017, and Thailand was one of its key markets in Southeast Asia that has already been downloaded here more than 10 million times in 2020 (YuguoNet, 2020). Another popular short video app was Instagram, according to NapoleonCat (2021), there were 2.8669 millions Instagram users in China in January 2021, and there were 16.47 millions Instagram users in Thailand in January 2021. Another key point was that the Gen Z was the main active user of TikTok and Instagram (YuguoNet, 2020). The research focused on the short videos from the 100 Thai and the 100 Chinese Gen Z who were ordinary communicators and had less than 1500 followers on both TikTok and Instagram. TikTok videos and Instagram Stories were diverse between Thai and Chinese Gen Z, they were mainly about lip-synching, dancing, fashion, beauty, idols, food, funny moments and so on (YuguoNet, 2020), and they reflected the similar and different motivations of the users. This research aimed to make a comparison about the motivations reflecting from the short videos between Thai and Chinese Gen Z on TikTok and Instagram Story. So the researcher chose the 2 most liked TikTok videos and the 2 latest Instagram

Stories because Instagram only published the time of video uploaded, selected 4 short videos from each Gen Z between May 1, 2018 and April 30, 2021. So total 800 short videos were to be analyzed for comparing the similar and different motivations between Chinese and Thai Gen Z.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology: This research used storytelling elements of short videos and quantitative content analysis to explore the similar and different motivations both with Chinese and Thai Gen Z users on TikTok (Douyin) and Instagram Story.

2. Research process: The process of research could be divided into three phases. Phase 1: Put the English & Thai & Chinese version survey on Google Form, Xing Survey (a China's app for surveying), then shred the link on social media, such as Wechat, and Facebook. Phases 2: Sent the personal message to require their TikTok (Douyin) and Instagram account. Phase 3: The researcher found that the users of TikTok can set the Instagram link on the profile, and the users of Douyin could write down the Instagram account on the profile. So the researcher focused on finding out this kind of users.

3. Data collection: After found out the target Gen Z users and selected the short videos, the researcher selected the 400 most liked TikTok (Douyin) videos and the 400 latest Instagram Stories from the 200 Gen Z.

4. Data analysis: According to the variables of this study, including message sender (the short video sender), channel of communication (TikTok and Instagram Story), and message (the contents of short video), the researcher coded the data. Then, frequency and percentage were calculated to interpret the meaning significant of the data. Based on the coding schemes of the visuals, sound, character, scenes, plot, and motivation categories, and the Uses and Gratification Theory to compare the specific motivations between the Chinese and Thai Gen Z.

Research Finding

Findings of Part 1: TikTok (Douyin). Basically, all the nine similar specific motivations on both TikTok and Douyin included: 1) Showing dancing (30 TikTok videos, 21 Douyin

videos), 2) showing lip-synching (30 TikTok videos, 14 Douyin videos), 3) showing idols (10 TikTok videos, 10 Douyin videos), 4) showing traveling (7 TikTok videos, 12 Douyin videos), 5) showing skills about music (singing and playing music instrument), and drawing (7 TikTok videos, 15 Douyin videos), 6) building and maintaining relationship between family member, friends, schoolmate, lover (12 TikTok videos, 8 Douyin videos), 7) showing and identifying own character of the third gender, gay, and lesbian (10 TikTok videos, 5 Douyin videos), 8) showing and inheriting traditional culture, including Thai dance and handcraft, and Chinese theater, costume, and architecture (14 TikTok videos, 7 Douyin videos), and 9) showing product, company, shop, and website of the business (12 TikTok videos, 7 Douyin videos). As to the all eleven different specific motivations, the Thai users aimed to: 1) share funny moment, such as funny behaviors of drunk people, joking, and teasing or pranking people (29 TikTok videos), 2) show sexy image (naked upper body, dressed little, and sexy dance) (25 TikTok videos), 3) show friendly (smiling) image (21 TikTok videos), 4) express opinion about politics and bully (2 TikTok videos), 5) show relatively true life without filter (170 TikTok videos), 6) share Thai native music (113 TikTok videos). But the Chinese users aimed to: 7) show makeup (49 Douyin videos), 8) show dialects (3 Douyin videos), 9) show luxuries and cars (5 Douyin videos), 10) show relatively pretty life with filter (87 Douyin videos), and 11) share English song (98 Douyin videos).

Findings of Part 2: Instagram Story. Basically, the similar ten specific motivations on Instagram Story included: 1) Showing food (18 Thai Instagram Stories, 43 Chinese Instagram Stories), 2) showing pet (10 Thai Instagram Stories, 23 Chinese Instagram Stories), 3) showing traveling (14 Thai Instagram Stories, 22 Chinese Instagram Stories), 4) showing idol (10 Thai Instagram Stories, 14 Chinese Instagram Stories), 5) showing dancing (13 Thai Instagram Stories, 11 Chinese Instagram Stories), 6) showing skill about music (singing and playing music instrument), and drawing (9 Thai Instagram Stories, 8 Chinese Instagram Stories), 7) showing daily lifestyle about school, family, lover, and night club to maintain and strengthen relationship with schoolmate, friend, lover, and family member (33 Thai Instagram Stories, 32 Chinese Instagram Stories), 8) showing and identifying own character of the third gender, gay, and lesbian (9 Thai Instagram Stories, 5 Chinese Instagram Stories), 9) showing product, company, shop, and website of the business (10 Thai Instagram Stories, 7 Chinese Instagram

Stories), and 10) showing and inheriting traditional culture, including Thai dance and handcraft, and Chinese theater, costume, architecture, and embroidery (6 Thai Instagram Stories, 6 Chinese Instagram Stories). As to the different twelve specific motivations, the Thai users aimed to: 1) show sexy image (naked upper body, dressed little, and sexy dance) (19 Thai Instagram Stories), 2) show friendly (smiling) image (18 Thai Instagram Stories), 3) show cute (winking) image (15 Thai Instagram Stories), 4) share funny moment, such as funny behaviors of drunk people, joking, and teasing or pranking people (8 Thai Instagram Stories), 5) show authentic life without filter (190 Thai Instagram Stories), 6) share Thai native music (24 Thai Instagram Stories), But the Chinese users aimed to: 7) show makeup image (23 Chinese Instagram Stories), 8) show dialect (2 Chinese Instagram Stories), 9) show luxury and car (6 Chinese Instagram Stories), 10) show Karaoke (7 Instagram Stories), 11) show pretty life with filter (55 Chinese Instagram Stories), and 12) share English song (17 Chinese Instagram Stories).

Results and Discussion

Maslow (1970) pointed out that the Uses and Gratification Theory is an extension of needs and motivations theory, which posited that people actively seek to satisfy a hierarchy of needs, including physical needs, security/safety needs, social/belonging needs, ego/self-respect needs, and self-actualization needs. The findings of the research supported the Maslow's hierarchy of needs that found the main 6 motivation categories of the Thai and Chinese Gen Z were to express themselves, interact with others, escape from day-to-day pressure, fame seeking, create self-identity, and commercial intention. There were 9 similar specific motivations, 11 different specific motivations on TikTok and Douyin. Also there were 10 similar specific motivations, 12 different specific motivations on Instagram Story.

Suggestions

TikTok Thailand could add more Thai local music and natural editing function. Douyin could add more English music and pretty editing functions. Instagram Story could add more music functions and more editing functions about showing food, pets, and daily life better. The short video apps enterprise could customize the relative functions for the

users in different country and area, could also create special functions for the unique target audience.

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