

# A Study on User Interaction Differences Between Local and Global New Media Platforms

Jing Wu<sup>1</sup>, Kunyu Li<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Sichuan Film and Television University, Chengdu 610037, China

<sup>1</sup>missawu666@163.com, <sup>2</sup>likunyu777@163.com

**Abstract:** *With the deepening integration of digitalization and globalization, new media platforms have become crucial channels for brand communication, cultural exchange, and social interaction. In recent years, Chinese new media platforms (such as Douyin, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu) have demonstrated a strong advantage in user numbers and engagement, while global new media platforms (such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) maintain a unique position in transnational communication and international communities. Focusing on differences in user interaction, this paper explores the differences between Chinese and foreign new media platforms in terms of functional design, cultural values, user engagement models, and business ecosystems. Through a literature review and case analysis, this paper suggests that users of local platforms tend to prefer immersive, contextualized, and consumption-oriented interaction, while users of global platforms prioritize expression, community belonging, and cross-cultural communication. These findings contribute to understanding the diversity of new media ecosystems and offer insights for multinational brands in balancing localization and globalization in their multi-platform communications.*

**Keywords:** New Media Platform; User Interaction; Localization; Globalization; Cross-Cultural Communication.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the widespread adoption of the internet and the rapid development of mobile technology, new media platforms have become core channels for social communication and commercial marketing. According to statistics from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2024), as of June 2024, the number of Chinese internet users has reached 1.09 billion, of which over 95% use short video platforms, with an average daily usage time of nearly two hours per person. This data clearly demonstrates that local new media platforms are playing an increasingly important role in users' daily lives. In contrast, global new media platforms face policy restrictions in China, resulting in a relatively limited user base. However, they still have irreplaceable influence in cross-border communication and international social networks. For example, YouTube has over 2.5 billion monthly active users worldwide (Statista, 2024), and Instagram has over 2 billion monthly active users (Meta, 2023), demonstrating that global platforms still hold a key position in cultural exchange and cross-border marketing.

However, there are significant differences in user interaction patterns between local and global platforms. Take Douyin, for example. Its algorithmic recommendation mechanism pushes highly personalized content based on user interests, fostering a strong sense of immersion and high-frequency interaction. Meanwhile, Xiaohongshu leverages user-generated content (UGC) and a community atmosphere to drive users through a cycle of "lifestyle sharing, interactive feedback, and consumer conversion." In contrast, Instagram users prioritize self-expression and aesthetic presentation, while YouTube users often foster community discussions through long videos or comment sections. These differences reflect not only differences in platform functionality and content logic but also differences in user behavior and values across different cultural contexts.

In the Chinese context, user interaction on local new media platforms is often closely tied to a relationship-oriented and socially relatable nature. For example, research indicates that Chinese users prioritize reciprocity and trust in social media interactions (Zhou & Wang, 2021). This cultural trait influences user motivations for actions like liking, commenting, and reposting. In Western contexts, user interaction emphasizes personal expression and free discussion, and the function of communities is more reflected in the spontaneous aggregation of public issues and interest groups (Papacharissi, 2010). Therefore, international brands must consider these differences when developing cross-platform communication strategies, otherwise they risk encountering communication effects that are not well-suited to the local environment.

While existing research has explored user behavior on both local and global new media platforms, comparative

studies remain insufficient (Jiang & Ma, 2022). In particular, systematic comparisons of user interaction between local and global platforms are rare. Therefore, based on existing theory and data, this article analyzes the user interaction patterns of local and global new media platforms, answering the following three questions:

- 1) What are the significant differences in user interaction patterns between local Chinese and global new media platforms?
- 2) What cultural values, technological logic, and business models underlie these differences?
- 3) What communication challenges and opportunities do these interaction differences represent for multinational brands? This study's research significance lies primarily in three aspects: First, it theoretically enriches cross-cultural new media research and provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding interaction differences; second, it offers practical insights for international brands' communication and marketing efforts in the Chinese market; and third, it reveals the diversity of new media interaction models at a social level, providing a reference for optimizing platform ecosystems and enhancing user experience.

## **2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

### **2.1 User Engagement Theory**

User engagement is a core concept in new media research. Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) define user engagement as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment users make in interacting with a brand or platform. It encompasses not only overt behaviors such as likes, comments, and reposts, but also deeper psychological experiences such as immersion, attachment, and re-creation. Research has shown that high levels of user engagement can enhance user stickiness, improve content dissemination efficiency, and promote commercial conversion (Brodie et al., 2011). On local platforms, algorithmic recommendations and immersive content drive frequent user interaction; on global platforms, community discussions and individual expression are more likely to stimulate sustained user engagement.

### **2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Uses and Gratifications Theory is an important theoretical framework for studying user media selection and usage behavior. Proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), this theory emphasizes that users are active individuals when using media, selecting media based on their own needs to satisfy diverse needs, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and identity. In the new media environment, this theory is widely used to explain why users adopt different interactive behaviors on different platforms. For example, Chinese users may prefer to use Douyin to satisfy entertainment and leisure needs, while seeking consumer references and social recognition through Xiaohongshu. In contrast, Western users interact more on Instagram for self-expression and social display, while interacting on YouTube may be motivated by learning, interest, or a sense of community.

### **2.3 Intercultural Communication Theory**

Intercultural communication theory provides an important perspective for understanding the differences in new media interactions among users from different countries and regions. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension theory suggests that cultural differences manifest themselves in values, communication styles, and social behavior. China, with its high-context culture and collectivist orientation, employs user interactions that emphasize relationship maintenance and group identity. Western societies, on the other hand, tend to be more low-context and individualistic, with interactions emphasizing individual expression and open discussion. This cultural difference directly influences user behavior across different platforms. For example, Chinese users on Xiaohongshu prioritize the "like-comment-follow" relationship chain, while American users on Twitter prioritize expressing opinions and engaging with public issues. Intercultural communication theory not only reveals the cultural roots of interaction differences but also provides a theoretical basis for cultural adaptation in multi-platform operations for multinational brands.

## **3. CURRENT STATUS**

### **3.1 User Interaction Status of China's Local New Media Platforms**

In recent years, China's local new media platforms have developed rapidly, forming a diverse ecosystem centered around short videos, social media, and community sharing. According to data from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2024), as of June 2024, the number of short video users in China reached 976 million, accounting for 89.5% of the total internet population, with an average daily usage time of approximately 101 minutes per person. Among them, Douyin and Kuaishou, as representative short video platforms, have user interaction activity significantly higher than the global average.

User interaction on the Douyin platform primarily involves content viewing, liking, commenting, sharing, and participating in challenges and topic activities. iiMedia Research (2023) data shows that Douyin has approximately 700 million daily active users, with each user initiating nearly 20 interactions per day on average. Interactions are highly immersive and contextualized. For example, users not only consume content in short videos but also actively participate in filming, imitating, commenting, and engaging in platform topic activities. This interactive model drives the rapid dissemination and commercialization of content. As a community-based sharing platform, Xiaohongshu's user interactions emphasize social connections and deep engagement in user-generated content (UGC). According to official Xiaohongshu data (2023), the platform has over 250 million monthly active users, of which over 70% like, save, or comment on notes, and approximately 40% participate in content creation. Xiaohongshu user interactions form a closed loop of "lifestyle sharing - social feedback - consumer decision-making." During these interactions, users not only exchange information but also form purchasing behaviors driven by emotional identification and trust.

Sina Weibo, a representative platform of traditional Chinese social media, has a user interaction model characterized by topic aggregation and social opinion guidance. According to Weibo's first quarter 2024 financial report (Sina Weibo, 2024), Weibo has approximately 580 million monthly active users, of which over 60% participate in topic discussions and reposts. User interaction is not only reflected in personal social interactions but also plays a vital role in public issues, hot topics, and brand communication. For example, Weibo's topic rankings and trending search mechanisms drive user focus and immediate interaction on popular content, enabling brands to quickly increase exposure and engagement through targeted topic marketing.

Overall, user interaction on China's local new media platforms exhibits the following characteristics:

- 1) Algorithm-driven and immersive experience: Platforms increase user dwell time and interaction frequency through personalized recommendations and content streaming.
- 2) Social relationship-oriented: User interactions are often based on acquaintances or interest groups, emphasizing reciprocity and trust.
- 3) Consumption-oriented: Interactive behavior is highly correlated with purchasing behavior, with short videos and community platforms becoming important entry points for social commerce.

### **3.2 Current Status of User Interaction on Global New Media Platforms**

Compared with Chinese local platforms, global new media platforms exhibit different characteristics in terms of user interaction patterns. Take YouTube, for example. According to Statista (2024), YouTube has over 2.5 billion monthly active users and over 1 billion hours of video views per day. YouTube user interaction primarily occurs through comment sections, likes, subscriptions, and sharing of video content, with interaction focusing more on information sharing and community discussions. YouTube's creator economy model encourages user participation in long-form video content creation and interaction, allowing users to become not only content consumers but also content producers.

As a major global visual social platform, Instagram's interactive model emphasizes personal expression and aesthetic presentation. Official data from Meta (2023) shows that Instagram has over 2 billion monthly active users, with approximately 60% of users liking or commenting at least once a day. Users interact through photos, short videos, Reels, and Stories, and the platform forms interest communities through algorithmic recommendations and tagging. Unlike domestic Chinese platforms, user interaction on Instagram focuses more on expressing individuality and maintaining interest communities, while driving less immediate consumption and purchases.

Twitter (now known as X) primarily focuses on information dissemination and interaction on public issues. According to Statista (2024), Twitter has approximately 450 million monthly active users worldwide, with

interactions primarily focused on retweets, comments, likes, and hashtag participation. User interactions are highly open and diverse, with public events, political issues, and social discussions being the primary topics of interaction. Twitter's immediacy and openness make it a crucial platform for cross-cultural communication and information dissemination, but overall interaction frequency is lower than on short video platforms, with user engagement more focused on expressing opinions than immersive consumption.

Overall, user interaction on global new media platforms exhibits the following characteristics:

- 1) Freedom of expression and community affiliation: Users prioritize individual expression and interaction with interest groups, with a less pronounced focus on social connections than on Chinese platforms.
- 2) Content depth and long-form video interaction: Users frequently engage with long videos, discussions, and community topics, while engaging less frequently with immersive short videos.
- 3) Cross-cultural and international communication orientation: Interaction on global platforms focuses more on information dissemination, opinion expression, and cross-cultural exchange, while consumer conversion is relatively weak.

From the above comparison, it can be seen that user interaction on Chinese new media platforms is centered on high frequency, immersion, and consumption, while global platforms prioritize freedom of expression, community discussion, and cross-cultural communication. This difference stems not only from differences in platform technology design and business models, but also reflects differences in cultural values, social behavior patterns, and policy environments between China and the West.

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Technical Logic Analysis

Chinese new media platforms differ significantly from global platforms in terms of technical design and algorithmic logic, which directly impacts user interaction patterns.

Take Douyin, for example. Its core technology is a content recommendation algorithm that uses machine learning to analyze user behavior (watch time, likes, comments, and reposts) to precisely deliver personalized content (Zhang & Negus, 2020). This algorithm-driven mechanism significantly enhances user immersion, fostering a cycle of "watching videos, interacting, and then recommending more." Kuaishou, on the other hand, focuses on strengthening social relationships. Its algorithm not only considers interest matching but also prioritizes content from friends or groups of followers, fostering stronger social engagement.

Xiaohongshu's technical design emphasizes community and user-generated content (UGC) ecosystems. Through content tags, interest tags, and community topics, the platform encourages users to post notes, comments, and favorites, creating a closed loop of interaction centered around interests and lifestyles. These features foster a sense of trust and identification among users during the interaction process, further driving consumer behavior. For example, a skincare review on Xiaohongshu can create a viral chain through likes, favorites, and comments, directly converting into purchases (Xiaohongshu, 2023).

In contrast, global platforms, in terms of technical logic, place greater emphasis on freedom of expression and information diffusion. YouTube's video recommendation algorithm is primarily based on interests and viewing history, but interactions are more often expressed through comments, likes, and subscriptions rather than immersive short video loops. Instagram fosters interest communities through hashtags and interest recommendations, but the primary drivers of interaction are individual expression and social display, encouraging users to build personalized profiles through visual content (Meta, 2023). Twitter/X, on the other hand, focuses on real-time information streams, with user interactions emphasizing the expression of opinions and engagement with public issues. While interaction frequency is not as high as on short video platforms, information dissemination is rapid and cross-regional communication capabilities are robust.

In general, differences in technical logic directly influence the depth and type of interactions. Local platforms increase short-term frequency and commercial conversion through algorithmic immersion and relationship-based recommendations, while global platforms prioritize community building and cross-cultural communication, with

interactions centered on information sharing and opinion expression.

#### **4.2 Cultural Context Analysis**

Differences in user interaction stem not only from technical design but also reflect deeper differences in cultural values. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimension theory suggests that collectivist societies emphasize relationships, reciprocity, and group identity, while individualistic societies emphasize independence, self-expression, and diverse values.

User interaction on Chinese domestic platforms highly reflects collectivist cultural characteristics. For example, interactions on Weibo and Xiaohongshu are often based on social networks. When commenting, liking, and reposting, users consider relationship maintenance and group identity. Users are more likely to form a closed-loop "interaction-trust-consumption" model, which is particularly evident in live-streaming e-commerce (iiMedia Research, 2023). In Douyin live-streaming e-commerce, the real-time interaction, reward, and commenting mechanisms between streamers and fans strengthen social relationships, making purchasing an extension of social interaction.

User interaction on global platforms reflects individualistic cultural characteristics. On Instagram, user interaction is more motivated by self-expression and social display. Likes, comments, and reposts primarily serve personal brand building and community recognition, rather than direct commercial purposes. Interactions on YouTube and Twitter/X are primarily focused on discussions of interests and sharing opinions. Users express their views and participate in public discourse in comment sections, rather than forming immersive, relationship-based interactions. Intercultural communication theory suggests that these differences mean that international brands must adopt different strategies in different cultural contexts to effectively stimulate user engagement.

Furthermore, language and social institutions also influence interaction patterns. Chinese platforms typically use Chinese as the primary language of communication and promote content tailored to policy and social trends, making interactions more localized and contextualized. Global platforms, with their diverse, multilingual, and multicultural user base, foster more open and diverse interactions, but also create a relatively low level of immersion and community engagement.

#### **4.3 Case Study Comparative Analysis**

Take brand marketing as an example. Nike's engagement strategies on its Chinese and global platforms differ significantly. On Douyin, Nike collaborates with influencers (KOLs) through short video challenges to encourage users to like, comment, and engage with brand topics, achieving high-frequency interactions and direct purchase conversions (Statista, 2024). On Instagram, Nike primarily posts brand stories and sports visuals, encouraging users to like, comment, and share. These interactions focus on brand image and community building, rather than immediate consumption.

Similarly, cosmetics brand Estée Lauder's interactions on Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) are centered around sharing skincare tips and user reviews, with users participating in notes and interacting, forming a chain of seeding. On YouTube, brands garner likes and subscriptions through long-form video tutorials and reviews, but the direct correlation between interaction and purchases is weak.

The above analysis demonstrates that technological logic, cultural context, and business models jointly shape the differences in user interaction between Chinese and international platforms. Domestic platforms emphasize immersion, high-frequency interaction, and consumer conversion, while global platforms emphasize freedom of expression, community, and cross-cultural communication. This difference has direct implications for international brands' communication strategies, content creation, and marketing decisions.

### **5. COUNTERMEASURES**

Based on an analysis of the differences in user interaction between local Chinese platforms and global platforms, international brands should adopt the following strategies for new media communication in the Chinese market:

#### **5.1 Cross-Platform Content Differentiation and Local Adaptation**

First, brands should develop differentiated content strategies based on the platform's technical logic and user interaction characteristics. On short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, brands can leverage short video algorithm recommendation mechanisms to create easily spreadable and interactive content, such as challenges, fun short videos, and interactive topics, to enhance user immersion and engagement. At the same time, they should focus on localizing content, incorporating Chinese social hot topics, cultural symbols, and festive events to enhance user resonance. For example, Nike's short video challenge on Douyin in China, coinciding with festivals like the Spring Festival and National Day, rapidly boosted brand exposure and engagement through user participation and user-generated content (UGC).

Community-based platforms like Xiaohongshu are more suitable for in-depth content marketing and social commerce strategies. Brands can leverage KOL/KOC collaborations, lifestyle sharing notes, and interactive Q&A sessions to encourage users to like, comment, save, and share within the community, creating a closed loop of "seeking, interacting, and purchasing." For example, Estée Lauder's skincare review notes on Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) foster a social trust network through user interaction, directly driving online purchases.

On global platforms like Instagram and YouTube, brands should emphasize brand storytelling, visual expression, and the development of communities of interest. They should attract user engagement through high-quality content while maintaining a consistent global brand image. Interactions tend to be more focused on likes, comments, and community discussions rather than immediate consumption. By using a differentiated content strategy across platforms, brands can satisfy local users' interaction preferences while maintaining global brand value.

## **5.2 Optimizing Social Relationships and User Interaction**

User interaction on local Chinese platforms is highly dependent on social connections and group identity. Brands should focus on building user communities and enhancing user belonging and loyalty through interaction. For example, Douyin livestreaming can enhance engagement through real-time comments, rewards, and sweepstakes. Xiaohongshu communities can increase user engagement through influencer interactions, user Q&A sessions, and topic discussions. Brands can also leverage algorithmic recommendations to optimize interaction paths, allowing users to derive psychological satisfaction from content consumption and interaction, thereby increasing brand stickiness and conversion rates.

## **5.3 Data-Driven Content and Engagement Management**

Leveraging big data and AI to monitor user behavior and analyze engagement data is key to optimizing brand communications. Brands can adjust content strategies and delivery plans based on user interests, engagement frequency, and content preferences to achieve targeted communication. For example, by analyzing the likes and comments of users on Douyin or Xiaohongshu, brands can identify the most popular content types and engagement formats, further optimizing topic design and advertising placement to increase engagement rates and commercial conversions.

## **5.4 Balancing Cultural Values and Marketing Messages**

Brands must balance cultural values with their global image when communicating in the Chinese market. Content design should align with the collectivist and relationship-oriented culture of Chinese users, such as emphasizing group participation, interactive rituals, and social recognition, while also maintaining the brand's core global values. For example, international brand promotions during festivals can incorporate traditional Chinese festivals or trending topics, integrating global brand messaging with local cultural context to enhance the interactive experience and user identification.

## **5.5 Long-Term Engagement and Loyalty Building**

While short-term promotions and engagement can generate traffic and conversions, building long-term brand value relies on ongoing engagement and cultivating user relationships. Brands should maintain user engagement through ongoing events, exclusive fan interactions, and membership systems. For example, regularly hosting online challenges, topic discussions, or community events can foster long-term user engagement and loyalty, thereby increasing word-of-mouth communication.



## 6. CONCLUSION

This article compares the user interaction landscape on Chinese local new media platforms (TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and Kuaishou) and global new media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter/X). It analyzes the technical logic, cultural context, and business model factors that underlie these differences, drawing the following key conclusions:

- 1) User interaction patterns differ significantly: Local platforms prioritize high-frequency, immersive, and consumption-oriented interactions, while global platforms prioritize individual expression, community discussion, and cross-cultural communication.
- 2) Technology and algorithms are key drivers: Local platforms increase interaction frequency and immersion through algorithmic recommendations and social relationship networks, while global platforms enhance freedom of expression and information dissemination through interest-based recommendations and topic-based communities.
- 3) Cultural Values Shape Interaction Behavior: Chinese users' collectivist and relationship-oriented culture prioritizes trust and group identity during interactions, while global users' individualistic culture emphasizes individual expression and diverse values.
- 4) Business Models Influence Interaction Conversion: Local platforms' social commerce models closely tie interaction to purchasing behavior, while global platforms' advertising and creator economy models prioritize interaction for information dissemination and community building.

Based on the above analysis, international brands' new media communications in the Chinese market should adopt a strategy that emphasizes cross-platform content differentiation, localized adaptation, social relationship optimization, data-driven management, cultural value balance, and long-term engagement. Through these strategies, brands can meet the interaction preferences of Chinese users while maintaining global brand consistency, maximizing communication effectiveness and commercial value.

In summary, significant differences exist between Chinese local new media platforms and global platforms in terms of user interaction. These differences reflect not only technical and business logic but also cultural values and the social environment. Understanding and effectively leveraging these differences provides valuable guidance for international brands' communication, marketing, and user relationship building in the Chinese market. Future research can further combine quantitative data and user behavior analysis to explore the actual impact of different interaction strategies on brand equity and user loyalty.

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