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短視頻的可供性及其賦權潛力

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摘要

短視頻日益普及，已成傳播界顯學。本文認為，短視頻憑藉其聲畫特徵和直觀特性，正將人類溝通導回更本質的形式。據此，短視頻的多種可供性可望成為公民自我賦權關鍵載體：既賦予話語權、強化自我認同，亦促進其積極參與社會。本文對短視頻創作者與使用者進行實證調查，論證它的可供性和賦權潛能。結果顯示積極製作內容者，對短視頻可供性和賦權效應的感知尤為顯著；且在各測量維度中，創作者所感知的可供性和所獲均強於使用者。文末據研究發現，析論相關學理與實務啟示。

關鍵詞：短視頻、可供性、賦權、使用者、創作者

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The Affordances of Short Videos and Their Empowerment Potentials

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Abstract

Short videos are becoming more and more popular. This paper argues that short videos are returning human communication to its more rudimentary forms, as they have the affordances to make human communication much more intuitive. As a result, short videos may be an important empowerment tool for the general population in terms of giving them a voice, increasing their self-perceptions, and allowing them to play a more active role in society. Results of a survey of short video creators and users ascertain such propositions. Short video creators who actively engage in content production are more inclined to perceive the medium's affordances. Short video creators experience the

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outcomes of empowerment more profoundly than short video users do across all measured aspects of the empowerment dimensions. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: short video, affordances, empowerment, users, creators

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引言

短視頻的流行是一個具有深遠心理和社會影響的傳播現象，TikTok 和 YouTube Shorts 等社交媒體的廣泛使用亦證明了這一趨勢的存在。短視頻完美契合了當今社交媒體用戶注意力時間持續減短、偏好碎片化內容的特點。既有研究多關注短視頻的負面效應，如實時滿足特性、碎片化內容、多巴胺刺激與成癮機制 (Chen et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2022)。本文則立足於短視頻的積極賦權作用，關注創作者與使用者如何從這種傳播媒介中獲益。

顯然，短視頻能為欠缺教育機會的人提供快捷、直觀、易獲取的學習資源。許多人通過 YouTube Shorts 學習到原本難以接觸的知識技能，成為「自學成才」的案例。但更重要的是，短視頻提供了傳統媒體時代難以實現的可能性。首先，普通人可以借助短視頻平台來分享故事、經歷與觀點，能夠有創造性與真實地表達自我，提升公眾對其生存現狀、社會成就與發展訴求的認知。其次，短視頻可作為社會宣導的有力工具，揭露影響邊緣群體的社會不公、人權侵害與制度性歧視問題 (Askanius, 2019; Yu, 2025)。

要理解短視頻何以成為這樣的平台，必須考察其內在的媒介可供性 (medium affordances)，也就是技術與用戶之間的互動所產生的可操作屬性 (Gibson, 1977)。多名學者的研究 (Song et al., 2021; Wang & Suthers, 2022; Zhao & Wagner, 2023) 共同指出，短視頻具有以下關鍵可供性：操作方便和低門檻讓用戶可以輕鬆消費，無縫融入碎片化日常生活中，從而提升使用頻率；算法推薦機制顯著降低了受眾接觸的門檻，使素人作品無需粉絲基礎也能「爆紅」，實現可見性的民主化；直觀的手機剪輯工具、濾鏡和範本大幅降低製作門檻，讓普通人無需專業技能即可成為創作者；影像、聲音、音樂、文字和特效融合於一起的多模態表達手段，讓創作者在有限時間長度內可以展開情感豐沛的創意敘事；一鍵分享功能則使內容能便捷擴散至社交網絡，擴大影響力並促進社群形成。正是這種可及性、可發現性、表達潛力與無障礙傳播的協同作用，使短視頻成為多元主體共同參與的動態平台。

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本文將結合賦權理論來闡釋短視頻對用戶產生的積極效應。賦權是指獲得更大的自主性、自我實現和影響力的過程 (Freire, 1973)。但賦權效應可能在創作者與使用者層面呈現差異化的表現 (Ma et al., 2025)。創作者通過以下途徑獲得賦權：自主呈現故事與觀點的敘事掌控，學習製作、編輯和行銷來發展實踐技能、借助廣告、贊助、電商變現等獲得經濟回報，直接互動與垂直受眾培養來構建社群，以及塑造潮流與話語來實現文化參與。與此對應的是，使用者則通過獲取既往被壟斷的多元化資訊、技能與視角實現賦權。本研究試圖探討賦權效應究竟作用於短視頻創作者還是使用者？具體體現在哪些維度？

本文數據來自針對短視頻創作者與使用者的大規模調研，通過可供性與賦權理論框架，系統闡釋短視頻賦權的過程與成效。

文獻回顧

過去二十年間，傳媒業經歷了深刻變革。少數大型媒體機構主導市場的傳統格局已讓位於小型化、分散化的媒體生態。隨著傳統媒體持續衰落，媒介面臨的問題似乎比答案更多。但這一轉變帶來了顯而易見的積極影響，那些曾被傳統媒體「守門人」(gatekeepers) 過濾篩選而失聲的群體，如今獲得了發聲機會 (Shoemaker & Vos, 2014)。以往媒體資源被少數人壟斷，普通人可望而不可及，但現在他們不僅能接觸多樣化的媒介平台，還可以自己創造內容。

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本研究以 Gibson (1977) 提出的可供性概念作為理論框架之一，考察短視頻的可供性，即為使用者和創作者提供行動與賦權潛能的媒介屬性。Gibson 強調可供性的雙重本質，認為可供性不僅作為客觀屬性存在，同時也由個體的主觀感知所塑造。就短視頻而言，這種媒介的可供性對不同人群可能具有不同意義，從而導致顯著的感知差異。比如內容創作者可能更重視短視頻製作的低門檻，而使用者或許更關注其視聽吸引力。

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在先前兩項關於可供性的研究中，筆者通過對資深印刷讀者和數字原住民的兩輪深度訪談 (Kiesow et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023)，描述了印刷新聞和數字新聞共有的三種可供性：物質性、感知性和關係性。物質可供性源於媒介的有形物質屬性；感知可供性從用戶對媒介屬性及其符號的認知中概念化而來，這種認知進而為用戶提供了採取特定行動的方向和能力；而關係可供性則通過媒介屬性與感知者之間的互動產生。

印刷媒介的可供性包括如下幾個方面：物質層面的導向性、實體性和可檢索性；感知層面的重要性、審美性和完整性；關係層面的類型、可信度、可流覽性和意外發現性 (Zhou et al., 2023)。數字媒介的可供性同樣有三個層面：物質層面的超文本性和可檢索性；感知層面的重要性、即時性和可信度；關係層面的便利性、適應性、類型、控制性和交互性 (Kiesow et al., 2023)。但顯然，這些簡單分類還不足以揭示系統的複雜性。本文將從更整體的視角探討可供性，旨在審視短視頻的媒介屬性如何激發媒體使用者與創作者對於賦權需求的行動潛力。

短視頻的媒介特性

首先，可以將印刷媒介與短視頻所屬的視聽媒介做一簡單對比，以理解短視頻的特性。有學者認為印刷媒介偏重理性，更適合傳遞抽象觀點；視聽媒介則更適合呈現具體對象和事件，而非抽象思想 (Meyrowitz, 1994)。舉例來說，在電視上看足球比賽顯然比報紙上更有體驗感，而類似通貨膨脹之類的深度話題，顯然更適合印刷媒介來解釋。

短視頻所依託的視聽媒介 (audio-visual medium) 最擅長傳遞情感 (Noroozi et al., 2017)。許多視頻因展現極度喜悅、悲傷情緒、可愛笑容和搞笑場景而迅速走紅，究其原因離不開「以情動人」。與之相對應，理性概念作為一種反思性過程 (reflective process)，正是印刷媒介的專長。

社交媒體的興盛與普及推動了傳播模式的轉型，由傳統的大眾傳播回歸到面對面的交流這一最基礎和本質的形式 (Turner, 2002)，有別

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於以往大眾傳播時代盛行的、以文字為基礎的傳播形式，例如知識份子常在媒體上辯論時事議題。

短視頻具有以下幾個特性，使其易於使用並受到當代內容創作者的青睞。

其一，短視頻回歸了人類基本的傳播形式，相比印刷等其他媒體形式具有更低的准入門檻。短視頻不需要文學技巧，僅需簡單的敘事結構。創作者使用智能手機或基礎視頻編輯工具就能製作內容，無需昂貴設備或專業剪輯技能。

其二，短視頻通常內容精煉，時長範圍從幾秒到幾分鐘不等。內容創作者能夠迅速吸引觀眾注意力，也不需要觀眾投入大量時間。

其三，短視頻高度依賴視聽元素來傳遞資訊和講述故事。這種視聽特性使其既能輕鬆捕捉真實事件，又能呈現虛構內容，對那些善於快速把握瞬間的內容創作者極具吸引力。這些創作者擅長視覺語言，可以運用創意畫面、剪輯技巧和視覺效果來強化敘事，激發觀眾興趣。基於此，創作者可以嘗試創作或傳播傳統媒體所忽略的內容，充分發揮創造力，用更新穎的敘事形式來講故事。

其四，短視頻通常在社交媒體平台上創作和分享，這些平台提供了海量受眾和便捷的分享功能 (Litt & Hargittai, 2016)。內容創作者可以利用社交媒體的病毒式傳播特性來觸達更廣泛的受眾並獲得認可。此外，短視頻還通過評論、點讚、分享和反應等互動功能促進受眾參與 (Khan, 2017)，內容創作者能夠即時獲得回饋，與受眾建立聯繫，並圍繞內容構建社群。

短視頻的眾聲喧嘩

在公共論壇和傳統媒體中，那些建制機構、強力個體和主流觀點的聲音 (Andrews & Caren, 2010) 更易傳播並受到重視。傳統媒體往往會突出報導政府官員、政客和其他有影響力人物的聲明、政策和行動 (Besley & Burgess, 2001)。它們也傾向於為商業利益而傳播資訊，包括大企業、行業領袖和廣告商。也有學者指出，傳統媒體往往反映並強化主流意識形態和觀點 (Herman & Chomsky, 2021; Parenti, 2007)。

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這包括那些被社會廣泛接受的主導性政治、社會和文化觀念，因為它們依賴於學術界、科學界和經濟學等各領域專家的觀點和評論（Lears, 1985）。這些聲音因其對特定話題的分析和見解而備受追捧。研究還發現，主流媒體在種族、民族、性別和社會經濟地位等方面也優先傳播主流群體的觀點和經歷，從而導致少數群體話語權有限或被邊緣化。

無論是印刷媒介還是數字媒介，其內容生產本質上都是特定時代技術條件的產物。但短視頻所提供的可供性與行動潛能，使眾多普通群體得以發聲並獲得發展機會，這正是賦權理念的核心所在。

賦權

賦權研究源起於二十世紀50至60年代西方社會對受壓迫族群覺醒的社會工作研究，以及70年代的自助運動浪潮。賦權是一個寬泛、複雜且多層次的概念體系，超越了具體學科界限，在政治學、心理學、管理學、傳播學等多個學科中都有研究。政治學領域主要聚焦於如何解放社會邊緣群體、推動集體行動以引發政治制度變革（VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002），心理學學者關注個體如何通過賦權實現自我效能感與掌控感（Zimmerman, 2000），管理學研究強調通過權力下放提升組織效能（Yuki & Becker, 2006），而傳播學則著力探究傳播在賦權過程中的作用，以及媒介和技術如何賦予公眾權力（Cadiz, 2005）。

儘管不同學科對賦權的關注點各異，Woodall等人（2012）仍嘗試提供了一個融合的新視角，將賦權界定為包含「過程」與「結果」雙重維度的複合概念，其過程涵蓋個體對無權狀態及不平等處境的認知覺醒，激發獲取權力、消解不平等的行動意願，以及實現人的解放這一賦權目標，此結論與Conger和Kanungo（1988）、Freire（1973）的學理闡釋相呼應。在賦權過程研究中，學者們著力揭示推動各階段進展的關鍵要素。關於賦權結果，學者們致力於評估過程的有效性，許多人借鑒Thomas和Velthouse（1990）提出的四維度框架來進行測量：意義、能力（自我效能）、影響及選擇（自主決定）。

政治學領域對賦權的關注源起於1960年代美國社會的動盪時期，當時種族主義和性別歧視等不平等現象普遍存在。主張教育平等的先驅教育家弗萊雷 (Paulo Freire; 1971) 首次提出賦權理念，強調參與、控制、權力和自我實現。儘管1964年《民權法案》廢除了種族隔離，1965年《投票權法案》賦予非裔美國人選舉權，但針對非裔的種族主義在全國範圍內仍難以根除。1976年，社會學家所羅門 (Barbara Solomon) 在協助黑人社區的背景提出：社會工作應通過「賦權」使黑人群體建立集體力量來對抗種族主義。他將賦權視為社會工作者與服務對象共同改變被污名化群體無權狀態的過程。政治參與 (如公共討論、制定政治議程和提高意識) 被認為是賦權過程的關鍵組成部分 (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Mehra et al., 2004; Zimmerman et al., 1992)。Zimmerman等人 (1992) 還評估了賦權效果，發現政治賦權能改變社會環境與政治制度。Bucy和Gregson (2001) 進一步指出，新媒體作為賦權機制可以增強政治參與和公民行動。

心理學領域，學者們更關注個體如何獲得對政治社會行動的感知控制力及實現目標的能力。部分學者將心理賦權定義為個體對自身與環境關係的認知 (Spreitzer, 1995)，另一些學者強調個體層面的三個核心要素：控制欲、自我效能感和感知能力 (Leung, 2009)。Becker等人 (2004) 則提出通過培養自主決策、自力更生等能力來促進心理賦權。Zimmerman等人 (1992) 提出心理賦權的三個關鍵組成部分：(1) 人際內在部分：改變周邊環境的感知能力；(2) 互動部分：個體與環境的互動以促成改變；(3) 行為部分：通過行動參與影響環境或組織。除賦權過程外，心理賦權的結果也獲得學界關注，Spreitzer (1995) 發現自尊與心理賦權呈正相關，通過技能發展、保持自力更生和獲得自控力實現的心理賦權，可幫助邊緣群體做出更佳人生決策 (Becker et al., 2004)。

管理學領域的賦權研究文獻同樣豐富，主要將賦權作為解決管理問題、提升員工效能的組織工具。Conger和Kanungo (1988) 將賦權過程界定為：識別導致失權的障礙、運用管理策略提升員工自我效能、通過賦權改善績效。多數學者認為，技能掌握 (從獲取新技能到深入理解再到吸收新資訊) 是實現個體賦權的重要有效途徑 (Amichai-

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Hamburger et al., 2008; Boehm & Staples, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 1992)。Thomas和Velthouse (1990)在研究工作和任務的內在動機時，提出職場賦權的四個維度，包括意義、能力（自我效能）、影響及選擇（自主決策）。Frymier等人（1996）從職場人際視角發現，個人目標與組織目標的一致性、清晰溝通和內在動機是提升員工賦權水準的關鍵因素。大量研究也考察了職場賦權的效果：Conger和Kanungo（1988）發現賦權既能作為權力下放的關係構建機制，也能成為激發員工動機的建構手段，從而提升組織效能與員工積極性。Zhang和Bartol（2010）關於賦權與創造力關係的研究則表明，賦權對創新過程的內在動機和參與度均有積極影響。

賦權研究在傳播與媒介領域具有關鍵地位，相關研究主要考察不同媒介形態在賦權過程中的作用及效果。Amichai-Hamburger等人（2008）從個體、人際、群體和公民四個層面分析互聯網的賦權機制，發現其能為個人、社區、事業和國家提供賦權機會。Mehra等人（2004）關於LGBTQ群體使用郵件列表的研究表明，邊緣群體通過互聯網工具可在政治、社會、教育和文化四大領域實現賦權。Leung（2009）提出賦權過程包含獲得生活掌控力和能力感建構，其研究證實網絡用戶自主創造內容能提升他們的滿足感與公民參與度，從而促進個體賦權。Bucy和Gregson（2001）關於新媒體與公民賦權的研究則揭示，新媒體的「即時性」特徵能增強公眾政治參與，促進政治主體與公民互動，構建賦權線民的「雙向」傳播管道。

除跨學科特徵外，賦權研究文獻可歸納為個人視角與集體視角兩大範疇（Hur, 2006）。個人層面的賦權過程被描述為發展能力以克服障礙（Becker et al., 2004），其核心要素包括：自我效能與自主權（Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Becker et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Zimmerman et al., 1992）、技能掌握（Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Boehm & Staples, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 1992）、能力感或成就感（Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Mehra et al., 2004; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990）、自尊（Spreitzer, 1995）以及動機（Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Frymier et al., 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990;

Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 1992)。集體層面的賦權則指個體通過與環境或組織的積極互動引發改變 (Zimmerman et al., 1992)，其構成要素包括組織效能 (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995)、群體認同 (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Brodie et al., 2013) 和主動參與 (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Leung, 2009; Mehra et al., 2004; Petrič & Petrovčič, 2014; Zimmerman et al., 1992)。

短視頻和賦權

有關短視頻這一新興媒介形態的賦權研究，現有文獻仍較為有限。但既有的互聯網或線上媒體的賦權研究可提供重要參照。Amichai-Hamburger等人(2008)發現互聯網為用戶提供獲取新技能和實現目標的豐富機會與資源，從而實現個體層面賦權；Brodie等人(2013)的研究則表明互聯網能促成志趣相投者組建社群、建立情感聯結，實現群體層面賦權；Mehra等人(2004)的研究揭示，社會邊緣群體通過互聯網工具設置公共議程、提升社會認知、開展公眾教育並促進參與。

具體到短視頻領域，既有研究發現：網絡用戶內容發佈促進了公民新聞發展，使普通個體獲得記者身份並分享自身故事 (Leung, 2009)，且內容創作者往往具有較高的滿足感與賦權體驗。針對農村短視頻平台「快手」的研究表明，其構建了虛擬鄉村共同體 (劉錦程、王淪志，2020)，當農民從鄉村敘事的「他者」轉變為自我言說的「主體」時，其主體性與公共意識得到強化 (沙垚、張思宇，2019)。劉天元等人的研究同時揭示，短視頻既能幫助農民構建集體記憶、提升自我價值、實現自我表達，但也可能導致螢幕成癮、孤獨感強化及家庭衝突頻發 (劉天元、王志章，2021)。作為新型表達媒介，短視頻平台為更廣泛群體提供了自我呈現與表達的機遇。

研究問題

總體而言，短視頻賦權研究仍處於初期階段，現有成果多聚焦現象描述，研究範圍有限且主要依賴定性研究與案例分析。本文旨在通

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過定量研究方法，對短視頻賦權展開更全面深入的探討。

基於上述分析，我們提出以下研究問題：

- 一、短視頻具有哪些可供性特質能同時吸引創作者與使用者？
- 二、短視頻創作者與使用者在哪些賦權維度上表現更為顯著？

研究方法

研究小組於2024年4月委託北京專業調研機構極術雲(JIshuyun; <https://databnu.com/#/index>)開展了專項調查。該公司專注於為學術機構提供大規模數據採集與實驗研究服務，在大數據分析、機器學習抽樣及行為追蹤領域具有豐富經驗，已為五十餘所中國頂尖高校提供符合機構審查委員會(institutional review board, IRB)倫理標準的研究方案。

為探究短視頻可供性與賦權潛能，研究小組明確要求極術雲鎖定兩類目標群體：短視頻創作者與使用者。創作者主要指那些在抖音、TikTok、快手等平台主動製作並發佈原創短視頻內容的個體，使用者則指主要消費短視頻內容(如流覽觀看、點讚、分享)而很少創作內容的個體。研究小組借助極術雲AI驅動的參與者篩選系統來分析受訪者在短視頻平台的實際使用軌跡，從而進行精準分類，並特別要求該公司招募的創作者與使用者樣本量基本均衡。調查最終獲得2,344份有效問卷，包括短視頻創作者1,295人，使用者1,049人。受訪者年齡分佈為18至78歲(平均35歲)，性別構成基本平均(男性51.9%，女性47.7%)。教育程度方面，59.5%為高中及以下學歷，其餘為大專及以上學歷。根據國家統計局2021年數據，該樣本具有人口代表性。

為測量短視頻的媒介屬性及技術可供性，本研究採用李克特量表設計了一系列問題。這些問題聚焦於短視頻在資訊傳遞效率、溝通便捷性、內容表達時效性、製作簡易度、多模態元素與短時長特徵的吸引力等層面，以及相較於印刷媒介在使用便捷性和傳播效果方面的優勢。由於現有研究中缺乏成熟的短視頻可供性量表，本文基於過往關於物質性、感知性與交互性可供性的研究成果(Kiesow et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023)，結合短視頻相關文獻，建立了本次探索性研究的測

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量標準：物質可供性包含聲音、視覺、視聽元素等；感知可供性涵蓋「易於資訊傳遞」、「製作簡易快捷」、「短時長吸引人」等；交互可供性則包括「促進便捷溝通」、「允許高效表達」等維度。

為測量短視頻的感知賦權效果，本研究採用李克特量表設計了一系列問題，包括：「短視頻提升我的自尊感、增強我的自信心、允許我表達觀點、教會我關鍵技能、在社群中發揮作用、幫助我獲得存在感，以及讓我意識到成就」。這些題項試圖從個人賦權和集體賦權兩個維度進行探索性測量。個人賦權涵蓋了自尊、自信、觀點表達、技能學習等層面，集體賦權則關注社群參與、存在感獲得、成就認知等內容。由於缺乏現有成熟量表，本研究採用自主開發的測量工具。

本研究採用多元協方差分析 (multivariate analysis of variance, MANCOVA) 檢驗短視頻創作者與使用者在感知可供性和賦權效果上的群體差異，同時控制教育水準和居住地區兩個協變數。選擇這兩個協變數的依據是：第一，教育水準直接影響文化素養，而前文已論證短視頻使傳播回歸更原始直觀的形式，降低了讀寫能力等文化素養的重要性；第二，在中國語境下，城鄉居住差異與教育水準存在高度相關性。因此將二者納入模型以控制其潛在影響。

第一個模型檢驗短視頻可供性的群體差異，包含11個因變數：資訊傳遞便捷性、溝通便捷性、聲音吸引力、視覺吸引力、視聽吸引力、短時長吸引力、高效表達性、製作簡易性、製作快捷性、使用便利性、效果優越性。第二個模型評估賦能效果的差異，包含7個因變數：提升自尊感、增強自信心、表達觀點、獲取關鍵技能、發揮作用、獲得存在感、成就認知。兩個模型均將群體身份（創作者對比使用者）作為引數，並納入教育水準和居住地區作為協變數以控制其潛在影響。該分析旨在通過統計比較創作者與使用者的感知差異，在控制社會人口學因素後，可靠地識別兩組間的實質性差異，從而回答研究問題。

研究發現

第一個研究問題關注短視頻的哪些特性吸引了短視頻創作者和使用者，研究者通過多元協方差分析比較了兩組人群的感知差異。表一

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匯總的結果顯示，兩組受訪者對短視頻功能特性的評價既存在顯著共性，又呈現關鍵差異。

表一 短視頻可供性感知的多元協方差分析結果

變數	平方和	自由度	均方	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η
因變數						
資訊傳播便捷性	3,133.83	12,336	3,133.83	5,621.07	<.001	.71
溝通便捷性	3,052.32	12,336	3,052.32	4,945.04	<.001	.68
聲音吸引力	3,018.42	12,336	3,018.42	4,212.64	<.001	.64
視覺吸引力	3,127.06	12,336	3,127.06	4,839.35	<.001	.67
視聽吸引力	3,076.44	12,336	3,076.44	4,577.19	<.001	.66
簡短吸引力	3,123.69	12,336	3,123.69	4,882.26	<.001	.68
高效表達性	3,191.52	12,336	3,191.52	4,725.47	<.001	.67
製作簡易性	3,262.70	12,336	3,262.70	4,358.15	<.001	.65
製作快捷性	3,342.09	12,336	3,342.09	4,445.48	<.001	.66
使用便利性	3,210.10	12,336	3,210.10	5,106.08	<.001	.69
效果優越性	2,936.98	12,336	2,936.98	4,909.24	<.001	.68
協變數						
教育水準		112,326		1.01	.432	.005
居住區域		112,326		6.16	<.001	.028

如表一所示，所有可供性變數均顯示創作者與使用者存在顯著差異 ($p < .001$)。創作者對所有可供性的感知強度均顯著高於使用者，且效應量較大 ($\eta^2 = .64-.71$)。其中，「資訊傳遞便捷性」的組間差異效應最大 ($F(12,336) = 5,621.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .71$)，其次是「使用便利性」($F(12,336) = 5,106.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .69$)。協變數中，居住地區具有微小但顯著的效應 ($F(112,326) = 6.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .028$)，而教育水準的影響不顯著 ($F(112,326) = 1.01, p = .432, \eta^2 = .005$)。

研究結果表明，用戶與創作者對短視頻可供性的感知存在顯著差異。多元協方差分析顯示，創作者對短視頻可供性的感知強度普遍高於用戶。這一發現印證了可供性理論的核心觀點：可供性既取決於客體屬性，也與感知者的認知密切相關。在本研究中，作為媒介深度使用者的創作者，對短視頻可供性的感知更為敏銳。

短視頻的可供性及其賦權潛力

第二個研究問題探討：短視頻創作者與使用者在哪些賦權維度上表現更為顯著？研究者再次採用多元協方差分析比較兩組人群對短視頻賦權潛力的感知差異。表二具體呈現了以下維度的測量結果：

表二 短視頻賦權感知的多元協方差分析結果

變數	平方和	自由度	均方	<i>F</i>	簽字	η
因變數						
提升自尊感	3,242.04	12,336	3,242.04	4,885.61	<.001	.68
增強自信心	3,002.36	12,336	3,002.36	4,660.23	<.001	.67
表達觀點	3,010.61	12,336	3,010.61	4,474.60	<.001	.66
獲取關鍵技能	3,253.02	12,336	3,253.02	4,853.89	<.001	.68
發揮作用	3,053.51	12,336	3,053.51	4,613.06	<.001	.66
獲得存在感	2,936.25	12,336	2,936.25	4,483.18	<.001	.66
成就認知	3,008.76	12,336	3,008.76	4,695.56	<.001	.67
協變數						
教育水準		72,330		1.18	.312	.004
居住區域		72,330		9.65	<.001	.028

表二數據顯示，創作者在所有賦權變量上的感知強度均顯著高於使用者 ($p < .001$)，且效應量較大 ($\eta^2 = .66-.68$)。具體而言，「提升自尊感」的組間差異最為顯著 ($F(12,336) = 4,885.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .68$)，其次是「獲取關鍵技能」($F(12,336) = 4,853.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .68$)。協變數中，居住地區仍呈現微小但顯著的效應 ($F(72,330) = 9.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .028$)，而教育水準的影響依然不顯著 ($F(72,330) = 1.18, p = .312, \eta^2 = .004$)。

研究數據明確顯示，創作者與使用者對短視頻賦權效果的感知存在顯著差異，創作者普遍比一般使用者更認同短視頻的賦權潛力。第二次多元協方差分析有力地證明了這一點。

總體而言，兩項分析共同表明：(1) 創作者對短視頻可供性及賦權潛力的評價顯著高於使用者，且效應量較大；(2) 地理居住區域在兩項模型中均產生微小但顯著的調節作用；(3) 教育水準未顯現統計學影響。

結論

本研究發現，短視頻作為一種媒介，在技術可供性與賦權潛力之間建立了重要聯繫，尤其對普通公民具有特殊價值。通過拓展 Gibson (1977) 的可供性理論和 Freire (1973) 的賦權理論，本研究闡明了短視頻的特定特徵，如可及性、簡潔性和視聽豐富性等，如何促進創作者與使用者在自我表達、自我實現和社會參與方面的發展。數據分析顯示，創作者與使用者對這些可供性及賦權效果的感知存在顯著差異，創作者在所有測量維度上均表現出更強的感知效果。

首先，本研究驗證了 Gibson (1977) 的觀點：可供性是生態情境中個體與環境互動的動態屬性，其感知效用受經驗與動機影響。積極參與內容生產的短視頻創作者，對媒介可供性（如易用性、快速製作和視聽吸引力）的感知明顯比被動使用者更為敏銳。這一發現與筆者 (Kiesow et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023) 早期關於關係可供性的研究一致，即用戶能動性與個人經驗的交互作用形塑了可供性感知。例如，創作者運用視覺敘事 (Meyrowitz, 1994) 和情感連接 (Noroozi et al., 2017) 的能力，正是其將技術可能性轉化為賦權工具的具體體現。

其次，在所有測量的賦權維度上，短視頻創作者都比使用者體驗到更為顯著的賦權效果。與觀看者相比，創作者無論將內容創作視為愛好還是謀生手段，都表現出更強的創作與分享主動性。這一發現呼應了 Freire (1973) 關於自我實現與社會參與的論述，創作者表現出的自尊提升、信心增強及社會影響力感知，恰好對應 Thomas 和 Velthouse (1990) 提出的賦權四維度：意義感、能力感、影響力和選擇權。該結果與 Leung (2009) 關於用戶生成內容的研究相印證，揭示了內容創作與公民參與、心理賦權的關聯。而使用者雖從教育性和宣導類內容中獲益，但其體驗到的賦權效果相對有限，這佐證了 Zimmerman 等人 (1992) 的觀點：被動消費難以啟動完整的賦權機制。這種差異凸顯了內在動機與主動參與對實現賦權的關鍵作用 (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zhang & Bartol, 2010)，未來研究可探索提升使用者參與度的策略。從短視頻使用者到活躍創作者，角色的轉換代表著一條實現數字賦權的潛在關鍵路徑，其實現得益於平台可供性對用戶參與的漸進式支持。

正如 Freire 提出的「實踐」理念，用戶要通過對數字世界的反思與行動來改造它，最終實現人人可參與的大眾化目標。

居住地區作為具有統計學意義的協變數，暗示了地域背景對賦權效果的影響。如劉錦程與王淪志 (2020) 對快手用戶的研究表明，傳統媒體資源匱乏的農村創作者可能獲得更顯著的賦權體驗，而城市用戶因資訊獲取管道多元，短視頻的賦權相對效用可能減弱。未來需進一步考察地域差異與社會經濟地位的交互影響。

本研究提出了有價值的見解，但仍存在不可避免的局限。由於研究僅以中國樣本作為數據來源，在一定程度上可能削弱研究結論在其他文化語境中的普遍適用性。此外，採用問卷調查法研究感知可供性與數字賦權時面臨固有局限。可供性產生於動態的人機交互過程，而問卷調查僅能獲取事後主觀陳述，受訪者可能錯誤歸因於平台功能。另一方面，數字賦權本質上是種生命體驗 (Freire, 1973)，即獲得話語權與能動性的非線性過程，但問卷測量將其簡化為標準的量化指標。這些局限凸顯了混合方法驗證的必要性，未來可結合深度訪談來觀察可供性的實踐過程及賦權的發生機制。

就測量工具而言，本研究最大局限在於採用單項測量題項。目前針對短視頻平台缺少將可供性與數字賦權結合起來的成熟量表，本文所進行的探索性研究雖具有現實合理性，但不可否認存在一定程度的缺陷，單項指標難以呈現實踐的複雜性，可能導致效度表面化、信度降低，無法檢測賦權過程中的多重關係。未來亟需開發短視頻情境下的可供性與賦權測量多維量表，唯有建立完整可靠的量表體系，才能真正理解短視頻賦權的潛力。

理論上，本文雖借鑒可供性與賦權理論來解析使用者與創作者的認知機制，但二者實質處於割裂狀態。未來研究應尋求能融合兩者的理論框架，例如技術接受與使用統一理論 (unified theory of acceptance and use of technology)。該綜合模型由 Venkatesh 等人 (2003) 提出，通過績效期望、努力期望、社會影響和便利條件四大核心維度，系統解釋資訊技術的採納使用行為。統一理論框架既能揭示特定短視頻可供性功能如何轉化為技術採納與用戶賦權，也能提供系統性分析工具來解釋數據。

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總之，本研究揭示了短視頻不僅只是單純的娛樂工具，更是賦權普通群體的強大平台，為深化數字賦權領域的相關研究做出了貢獻。通過降低准入門檻和增強情感與視覺敘事，短視頻以傳統媒體無法達到的方式實現了內容創作的民主化（Andrews & Caren, 2010; Herman & Chomsky, 2021）。但媒介的賦權潛力並不一定帶來賦權結果，需通過主動參與才能充分釋放，創作者與使用者的顯著差異印證了這一點。為此，政策制定者與平台方應通過簡化編輯功能、開設創作培訓等舉措降低參與門檻，吸引更多人成為創作者。最後需要強調的是，賦權不僅是一個最終目標，還是一個持續的過程。當人們不再被動使用技術，而是主動利用技術在碎片化的數字世界中獲得自主時，才能真正體會到賦權的意義與價值。

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The Affordances of Short Videos and Their Empowerment Potentials

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Introduction

The popularity of short videos, as evidenced by the rise of social media apps such as TikTok and YouTube Shorts, is a phenomenon with far-reaching psychological and social implications. Short videos are perfect for today's social media users with a short attention span and with an appetite for snackable content. Much of the past research, however, has focused on the negative aspects of short videos, such as their instant gratification, bite-size content, dopamine-inducing nature, and addictive nature (Chen et al., 2023; Ye et al., 2022). In this paper, we are focusing on something positive, the empowering function of short video, and how creators and users may benefit from this medium of communication.

Obviously, short videos can provide quick, intuitive, and accessible educational resources to people who may have limited access to traditional educational opportunities. Many can attest to how they have become homemade handymen by watching YouTube shorts to acquire knowledge and skills that were previously not available. But more importantly, short videos offer many benefits that were not readily available during the age of traditional media. For example, those videos can serve as a platform for average individuals and communities to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives. This enables them to express themselves creatively and authentically, raising awareness about their struggles, achievements, and aspirations. In this vein, they can be powerful tools for advocacy and activism. They can highlight social injustices, human rights violations, and systemic inequalities that affect different groups in the population (Askanius, 2019; Yu, 2025).

Understanding short videos as a viable platform necessitates examining their inherent medium affordances—the actionable properties emerging from the interaction between the technology and its users (Gibson, 1977). Key affordances (Song et al., 2021; Wang & Suthers, 2022; Zhao & Wagner, 2023) uniquely position short videos for widespread adoption. Brevity and low cognitive load afford effortless consumption and seamless integration into fragmented daily routines, encouraging high engagement frequency. Algorithmic discoverability significantly lowers barriers to audience reach, enabling content from unknown creators to “go viral” without established followings, democratizing visibility. Low production barriers, facilitated by intuitive smartphone editing tools, filters, and templates, empower almost anyone to become a creator without specialized skills or resources. Multimodal expressivity—combining moving images, sound, music, text overlays, and effects—affords rich, emotionally resonant communication and creative storytelling within tight time constraints. Finally, seamless shareability and embedding affordances make content easily distributable across social networks and websites, amplifying reach and fostering community formation. It is precisely this confluence of accessibility, discoverability, expressive potential, and frictionless distribution that allows short videos to function effectively as a dynamic platform for diverse actors.

On the other hand, the significant positive benefits of short videos are best conceptualized through the lens of empowerment, understood as the process of gaining greater autonomy, self-realization, and influence (Freire, 1973). We conceptualize that empowerment manifests distinctly for creators and users or consumers (Ma et al., 2025). Creators are empowered through narrative control, such as crafting their own stories and perspectives; through skill development, such as learning production, editing, and marketing; through economic opportunity, such as monetization via advertising, sponsorships, and e-commerce; through community building by directly engaging followers and finding niche audiences; and through cultural participation by shaping trends and discourse. Users, conversely, are empowered through democratized access to diverse information, skills, and different perspectives previously gatekept. Here, we want to explore who exactly is being empowered. Is it the creators of short videos or the users of short videos? And in what specific areas are they empowered?

The empirical evidence of this paper came from a large survey of short video creators and users. And we use the concept of affordances and

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empowerment to explicate and explain the process and outcome of short video empowerment.

Literature Review

The media industry has been transformed over the last two decades. The traditional landscape of a few large media organizations dominating the market has given way to smaller, fragmented media. As a result, we seem to face more problems than answers as traditional media continue their secular business decline. One positive that comes out of this is that people whose voices were often unheard in traditional media, where media “gatekeepers” filtered and selected which voices would be represented, now have a chance to be heard (Shoemaker & Vos, 2014). In the past, they did not have access to media resources, but now they can access multiple media platforms and even create their own content.

Affordances in Short Video

In this study, we rely on Gibson’s conceptualization of affordances as one of the theoretical frameworks to examine short video affordances, that is, the medium attributes that offer action and empowerment potentials to their users and creators. Gibson (1977) emphasized the dual nature of affordances, positing that affordances do not exist solely as objective properties but are also shaped by individuals’ subjective perceptions. In the context of short videos, the affordances of this medium may hold different relevance for different people, leading to robust variations in perception. For example, content creators may prioritize the low production barriers associated with short videos, while regular audiences may focus more on their visual and auditory appeal.

In two previous studies on affordances, we described three kinds of affordances—physical, perceived, and relational, across both print and digital news via two rounds of in-depth interviews with tenured print readers and digital natives (Kiesow et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023). Physical affordances are generated by the tangible and materialistic attributes of a medium. Perceived affordances are conceptualized from the users’ recognition of the attributes and signifiers of the medium, which in turn

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give them a direction and an ability to take certain actions. On the other hand, relational affordances are generated via interaction between an attribute and the perceiver.

In print, these affordances include the physical: wayfinding, materiality, and retrievability; the perceived: importance, aesthetics, and completeness; and the relational: genre, trustability, browsability, and serendipity (Zhou et al., 2023). In digital, they include the physical: hypertextuality and retrievability; the perceived: importance, immediacy and trustability; and the relational: convenience, adaptability, genre, control, and interactivity (Kiesow et al., 2023). But clearly, these simple categorizations mask a more complex system. In this paper, we are approaching affordances more from a holistic perspective. The goal of this paper is to interrogate the medium of short video and explicate how the attributes of short video can be perceived as action potentials in supporting the empowerment needs of media users and creators.

Short Video as a Medium

As a starter, the attributes of short video can be understood through a simple comparison between the print medium and the audio-visual medium of short video. For example, some people argue that print is an intellectual medium, because print is amenable to deliver abstract ideas, whereas in an audio-visual medium, concrete objects and events, rather than ideas, are best seen and heard (Meyrowitz, 1994). For example, a football game is more effectively experienced through television than through print media. In contrast, print can illuminate the concept of inflation more effectively than moving images.

The audio-visual medium, which short videos use to deliver their content, is best used to show emotion as well (Noroozi et al., 2017). We have seen many videos go viral as they depict extreme happiness, sadness, cute smiles, and funny scenes, demonstrating that the medium is best used to portray emotion, instead of reason. The concept of reason, on the other hand, is a reflective process, in which print excels.

A simple reflection on the history of mass media allows us to conclude that today's social media is reversing communication from the traditional mass communication to its basic and primitive form, where interpersonal communication was the norm (Turner, 2002), rather than the progressive,

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literacy-based communication that was prevalent in the mass communication era, where intellectuals debated the matters of the day in the media.

Specific to short videos, several attributes make them accessible and favored by today's content creators:

Short videos, by returning to the basic human communication format, they have a lower entry barrier compared to other forms of media, such as print. They do not need literary skills, and they rely on simple storytelling structures. With the capability to be created using smartphones or basic video editing tools, content production becomes accessible without expensive equipment or professional editing skills.

Short videos are typically brief and concise, ranging from a few seconds to a few minutes in length. This format allows content creators to quickly capture and engage the audience's attention while not requiring a significant time commitment from viewers.

Furthermore, these videos heavily depend on audio-visual elements to convey messages and tell stories effectively. This audio-visual nature makes it easy to capture both natural or fictional events, making them appealing to content creators who can quickly capture the moment. Those adept in visual grammar can enhance their storytelling and capture the audience's interest through creative visuals, editing techniques, and visual effects. Along this line, users can also try to create or cover something that is often neglected by traditional media, allowing more people to exercise their creativity and experiment with newer forms of storytelling.

And short videos are commonly shared on social media platforms, which provide a built-in audience and easy sharing capabilities (Litt & Hargittai, 2016). Content creators can leverage the viral nature of social media to reach a wider audience and gain recognition for their work. In addition, short videos often encourage audience engagement through these interactive features, such as comments, likes, shares, and reactions (Khan, 2017). This interactive aspect allows content creators to receive immediate feedback, connect with their audience, and build a community around their content.

Voices in Short Videos

In traditional media, established institutions, powerful individuals, and mainstream perspectives are the voice that are often heard and give prominence in the public forum (Andrews & Caren, 2010). Traditional

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media often amplifies the voices of government officials, politicians, and other influential figures. Their statements, policies, and actions are frequently covered and given significant attention (Besley & Burgess, 2001). They also tend to supply voices to corporate interests, including large businesses, industry leaders, and advertisers. Scholars have noted that traditional media tend to reflect and reinforce mainstream ideologies and perspectives (Herman & Chomsky, 2021; Parenti, 2007). Such perspectives can include dominant political, social, and cultural beliefs that are widely accepted in society, as they rely on expert opinions and commentary from professionals in various fields such as academia, science, and economics (Lears, 1985). People seek these voices for their analysis and insights on specific topics. Research also found that mainstream media prioritize the voices and experiences of majority groups in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. This can result in the underrepresentation or marginalization of minority voices.

In the end, we conclude that media production, whether in print or digital, is a product of the day's technology. But short videos offer affordances, or action potentials, that empower underrepresented populations by giving them a voice and creating new opportunities. This capability is core of the idea of empowerment.

Empowerment

Empowerment research originated from social work studies on the awakening of oppressed ethnic groups and communities in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the self-help movements of the 1970s in Western society. It is a rather broad term that transcends disciplinary boundaries. It has been examined across a wide range of disciplines over the years, including political science, psychology, management, and communication. In political science, studies surrounding empowerment mainly focus on liberating and mobilizing the socially marginalized to act collectively and evoke changes in the political system (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002). In the field of psychology, scholars studying empowerment aim to determine how to empower individuals to achieve self-efficacy and obtain perceived control (Zimmerman, 2000). Management researchers emphasize delegating power to employees to improve organizational effectiveness (Yuki & Becker, 2006). Regarding communication, scholars are interested in its role in the

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empowerment process and how media and technology empower the public (Cadiz, 2005).

Despite the varying priorities of different academic disciplines, Woodall and colleagues (2012) tackled empowerment from a new angle, introducing it as a multi-construct with two dimensions: processes and outcomes. The empowerment process is generally described as follows: (a) making people aware of their powerlessness or inequality; (b) inspiring people to take action to gain power and eradicate such inequality; and (c) liberating and empowering people (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Freire, 1973). In the context of the empowerment process, scholars are most interested in unveiling the key components underlying the different stages of the process that facilitate the process of empowerment. Regarding the outcomes of empowerment, scholars aim to evaluate the effectiveness of this process. Many draw on the four dimensions of empowerment introduced by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) to measure its outcomes: meaningfulness, competence (self-efficacy), impact, and choice (self-determination).

In the field of political science, empowerment theory originated in the 1960s when America was in a state of social turmoil, with pervasive discrimination—such as racism and gender inequality—deeply entrenched in various aspects of life. During these difficult times, Paulo Freire (1971), a pioneering educator advocating for equality in education, first promoted the idea of empowerment, focusing on participation, control, power, and self-realization. Despite the passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which banned segregation, and the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, which granted African Americans the right to vote, racism against African Americans remained deeply rooted in the country and was challenging to eradicate. In 1976, sociologist Barbara Solomon described the concept of empowerment in the context of assisting the Black community, suggesting that social work should “empower” Black individuals to build collective strength and resilience to combat racism and fight for equality. He viewed empowerment as a process in which social workers and clients engage in a series of activities to change the powerless status quo of stigmatized group members. Political participation—such as public discussion, setting the political agenda, and raising awareness—is considered one of the key components of the empowerment process (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Mehra et al., 2004; Zimmerman et al., 1992). Zimmerman

and colleagues (1992) also evaluated the outcomes of empowerment and found that political empowerment can effect changes in the social environment and political systems. Bucy and Gregson (2001) argue that new media, when used as an empowering mechanism, can enhance political participation and civic engagement.

On the other hand, psychologists are more concerned with how people can be given a sense of control over political and social actions, as well as the ability to carry out goals and aspirations. Some scholars view psychological empowerment as individuals' cognitions or perceptions about themselves in relation to their environment (Spreitzer, 1995). Others emphasize psychological empowerment on an individual level, identifying three core elements: the desire for control, self-efficacy, and perceived competence (Leung, 2009). Similarly, capabilities such as self-determination, self-sufficiency, and decision-making ability have been introduced to foster psychological empowerment (Becker et al., 2004). Zimmerman and colleagues (1992) laid out three components essential to conceptualizing psychological empowerment: (a) the intrapersonal component: one's perceived capacity to change their surrounding environment; (b) the interactional component: the interactions between a person and their environment to affect change; and (c) the behavioral component: action-oriented participation to elicit influence on the environment or within an organization. In addition to empowerment processes, the outcomes of psychological empowerment have also received academic attention from scholars. Spreitzer (1995) discovered a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and self-esteem. Achieving psychological empowerment through skill development, maintaining self-sufficiency, and gaining self-control can assist marginalized individuals in making improved decisions about their lives (Becker et al., 2004).

Literature on empowerment is also prevalent in the field of management, where it is utilized as a tool to tackle managerial issues and promote employee efficiency from an organizational perspective. Conger and Kanungo (1988) described empowerment processes as involving the identification of obstacles leading to powerlessness, the employment of managerial strategies to promote self-efficacy among employees, and improved performance through the empowerment of employees. Many scholars regard mastery of skills or mastery experiences—ranging from acquiring new skills to gaining in-depth understandings to assimilating new information—as an important

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and effective procedure that leads to individual empowerment (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Boehm & Staples, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 1992). In studying intrinsic motivation for a job or task, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) identified four dimensions of empowerment in the work setting: meaningfulness, competence (self-efficacy), impact, and choice (self-determination). To examine empowerment from an interpersonal perspective in the workplace, Frymier and colleagues (1996) found that the alignment of individual goals with organizational goals, clear communication, and intrinsic motivation are crucial factors in improving employees' levels of empowerment. Many studies have also examined the outcomes of empowerment in work settings, as organizations typically set goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate employee performance. Conger and Kanungo (1988) found that empowerment can function as both a relational construct for delegate power and as a motivational construct for enabling employees, thereby improving organizational effectiveness and increasing employee motivation. Another study exploring the relationship between empowerment and creativity found that empowerment has a positive influence on both intrinsic motivation and engagement in the creative process (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Empowerment has been a crucial issue in communication and media studies. Various studies in these fields have focused on examining the role of different media formats in the empowerment process and their effects. Amichai-Hamburger and colleagues (2008) analyzed the internet as an empowering tool on four levels: the individual, the interpersonal, the group, and the citizen. They found that the internet affords opportunities to empower individuals, their communities, causes, and countries. Another study by Mehra and colleagues (2004) examined how the LGBTQ community utilized online mailing lists as tools for empowerment. Their research revealed that empowerment can be achieved across four domains—political, social, educational, and cultural—for marginalized groups using internet tools. Leung (2009) posits that the empowerment process entails gaining mastery or control over one's life and developing a sense of competence. Their research further demonstrated that producing and publishing user-generated content online increases user gratification and civic engagement, which in turn promotes individual empowerment. Similarly, a previous study by Bucy and Gregson (2001), which examined new media and citizen empowerment, revealed that the “real-time” nature

of new media enhances political participation among the public and fosters interactions between political actors and citizens, creating a “two-way” communication channel to empower citizens online.

Besides the cross-disciplinary characteristic of empowerment research, literature surrounding this theory can be summarized into two categories: the personal perspective and the collective perspective (Hur, 2006). On the personal level, the empowerment process can be described as developing capabilities to overcome obstacles and achieve empowerment (Becker et al., 2004). The underlying components of individual empowerment usually involve self-efficacy, self-determination (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Becker et al., 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Zimmerman et al., 1992), mastery of skills (Amichai-Hamburger, et al., 2008; Boehm & Staples, 2004; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 1992), feelings of competence or accomplishment (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Leung, 2009; Mehra et al., 2004; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), self-esteem (Spreitzer, 1995), and motivation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Frymier et al., 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 1992). On the collective level, empowerment can be defined as an individual’s active engagement with the environment or organization to elicit change and influence (Zimmerman et al., 1992). The components comprising empowerment on a collective level include organizational effectiveness (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995), group identity (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Brodie et al., 2013), and proactive engagement (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2008; Bucy & Gregson, 2001; Leung, 2009; Mehra et al., 2004; Petrič & Petrovčič, 2014; Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Short Video & Empowerment

The recent emergence of short videos, a relatively new media format, has limited literature on the empowerment they offer. However, past research has examined the empowerment associated with the internet or online media, which provides some insights into this issue. Amichai-Hamburger and colleagues (2008) found that the internet offers numerous opportunities and abundant resources for users to acquire new skills and

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achieve their goals, thus empowering them at an individual level. Additionally, the internet provides a platform for like-minded individuals to form communities, foster friendships and bonds, and generate empowerment at the group level (Brodie et al., 2013). In a study by Mehra and colleagues (2004), the internet serves as an empowerment tool utilized by socially marginalized groups to set public agendas, raise awareness, educate the public, and promote participation.

Specific to short videos, past research found that publishing user-generated content online promotes citizen journalism, empowering average individuals to become journalists and share their stories (Leung, 2009). This study also showed that users who actively produce and publish content online tend to have a high level of satisfaction and empowerment. Another study on Kuaishou, a rural short video platform, highlighted its role in constructing a virtual village community (Liu & Wang, 2020). Farmers' transformation from "others" in rural narratives to "subjects" of self-expression enhances their subjectivity and public awareness (Sha & Zhang, 2019). Liu and Wang (2021) also found that short videos can help farmers carve out collective memories, enhance self-worth, and achieve self-expression; however, they can also lead to negative effects such as screen addiction, intensified loneliness, and frequent family conflicts (Liu & Wang, 2021). As a new medium for expression, short video platforms provide a broader range of individuals with opportunities to present and express themselves.

Research Questions

Overall, research on the empowerment of short videos is still in its early stages, with a focus on descriptive phenomena, and the scope of research is limited, often relying on qualitative research and case analysis. This paper aims to conduct a more comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the empowerment of short videos through quantitative research.

Based on the above, we proposed the following research question (RQ):

RQ1: What are some affordances of short videos that appeal to short video creators and users alike?

RQ2: In what areas are empowerments more pronounced for short video creators and users alike?

Methods

We commissioned a survey in April 2024 through Jishuyun (極術雲; <https://databnu.com/#/index>), a Beijing-based professional research firm specializing in large-scale data collection and experimental studies for academic institutions. The company holds extensive expertise in big data analytics, machine learning-driven sampling, and behavioral tracking, serving over 50 leading Chinese universities with institutional review board (IRB)-compliant methodologies. To investigate short video affordances and empowerment potentials, we explicitly asked Jishuyun to target two groups: the creators and users of short video. Creators were defined as individuals who actively produced and published original short video content (e.g., filming, editing, posting) for platforms like Douyin, TikTok, and Kuaishou. Users are individuals who primarily consume short video content (e.g., browsing feeds, liking, sharing) without regular content creation. Leveraging Jishuyun's AI-powered participant screening infrastructure, we were able to use the participants' user trail in short video platforms to determine their categories, and we specifically asked the company to recruit approximately equal numbers of creators and users for this survey. In the end, a total of 2,344 valid surveys were returned, with 1,295 from creators and 1,049 from users. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 78 years old, averaging 35 years old. In terms of gender, 51.9% of them are males, and 47.7% are females, essentially an equal number from both genders. About 59.5% of them are high school graduates or below, while the remainder are college educated or graduates. In general, this sample appears representative of the general population, as indicated by the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2021).

To measure the attributes or technological affordances of short video, we asked a battery of questions in Likert scales, such as “short videos make it easy to inform,” “short videos facilitate easy communication,” “short videos allow creators to express more in a short time,” “the production of short videos is easy and fast,” “the elements of sound, visual, audio-visual, and shortness in short videos are most appealing,” and “short videos are easy to use and have better results compared to print.” Because no existing scales exist for short video affordances, we relied on our past research

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findings on physical, perceived, and interactional affordances and tried our best to summarize research related to short videos to establish a baseline for this exploratory research. As a result, there are physical affordances like sound, vision, and audio-visuals. The perceived affordances included easy to inform, production is easy and fast, and shortness is appealing, among others. The interactive affordances include the facilitation of communication through short videos and the capacity for creators to convey more content.

To measure the perceived empowerment of short videos, we asked a battery of questions in Likert scales, such as “short videos increase my self-esteem,” “short videos increase my self-confidence,” “short videos allow me to express my views,” “short videos teach me critical skills,” “short videos play a role in community,” “short videos help me gain a sense of existence,” and “short videos make me aware of achievements.” These items tried to tap into the personal, including self-esteem, self-confidence, expressing views, teaching me critical skills, and collective empowerment ideas, such as playing a role in the community, gaining a sense of existence, and making me aware of achievements. Again, no existing established scales are available, so these items remained exploratory.

A couple of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to test group differences (video creators versus video users) in perceived affordances and empowerments of short videos, while controlling for covariates of education level and residence area. These two were chosen as covariates, as education is a key to literacy. In our introduction, we made an argument that short video returned human communication to its more primitive and intuitive nature, so literacy is less important in this form of education. We also suggest that residence, in terms of rural and urban users and creators, may highly correlate with education in China. So, these two were put in the model as covariates to control for their influences.

The first model examined differences in the affordances of short videos, with eleven dependent variables: easy to inform, easy to communicate, audio appeal, visual appeal, audio-visual appeal, shortness appeal, express more, easy to produce, quick to produce, easy to use, and better results. The second model evaluated differences in empowerment outcomes, with seven dependent variables: more self-esteem, more confidence, expressing view, gaining critical skills, playing a role, sense of existence, and awareness of achievement. Both models included group membership (creators versus users) as the independent variable, with education level and residence area

as covariates to account for their potential impacts. The analysis aimed to address the research questions by statistically comparing creators’ and users’ perceptions while controlling for sociodemographic factors, which helps reliably identify meaningful differences between the two groups.

Results

The first research question explored what affordances of short videos appealed to short video creators and users alike. To explore this, a MANCOVA was used to compare how creators and users perceive the affordances of short videos. The results, summarized in Table 1, highlight key similarities and differences between the two groups’ perspectives on these features.

Table 1 MANCOVA Results for Perceived Short Video Affordances

Variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p	η^2
Dependent variable						
Easy to inform	3,133.83	12,336	3,133.83	5,621.07	<.001	.71
Easy to communicate	3,052.32	12,336	3,052.32	4,945.04	<.001	.68
Audio appeal	3,018.42	12,336	3,018.42	4,212.64	<.001	.64
Visual appeal	3,127.06	12,336	3,127.06	4,839.35	<.001	.67
Audio-visual appeal	3,076.44	12,336	3,076.44	4,577.19	<.001	.66
Shortness of appeal	3,123.69	12,336	3,123.69	4,882.26	<.001	.68
Express more	3,191.52	12,336	3,191.52	4,725.47	<.001	.67
Easy to produce	3,262.70	12,336	3,262.70	4,358.15	<.001	.65
Quick to produce	3,342.09	12,336	3,342.09	4,445.48	<.001	.66
Easy to use	3,210.10	12,336	3,210.10	5,106.08	<.001	.69
Better results	2,936.98	12,336	2,936.98	4,909.24	<.001	.68
Covariate						
Education		112,326		1.01	.432	.005
Residence area		112,326		6.16	<.001	.028

As shown in Table 1, significant differences were found between creators and users across all affordance variables ($p < .001$). Creators consistently reported stronger perceptions of affordances than users, with large effect sizes ($\eta^2 = .64$ to $.71$). For example, “easy to inform” showed

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the largest effect ($F(12,336) = 5,621.07, p < .001, \eta^2 = .71$), followed by “easy to use” ($F(12,336) = 5,106.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .69$). The covariate residence area had a small but significant effect ($F(112,326) = 6.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .028$), while education level was nonsignificant ($F(112,326) = 1.01, p = .432, \eta^2 = .005$).

The findings suggest that there is a notable difference between users and creators in their perceptions of the affordances of short videos. In general, the MANCOVA test reveals that creators feel more strongly about the affordances of short videos than users. This taps into the idea that affordances depend on the attributes of the objects and perceivers. Creators, who have intimate knowledge of the medium, are more likely to perceive the affordances of the short videos.

The second research question wonders, in what areas are empowerments more pronounced for short video creators and users alike? Another statistical analysis (MANCOVA) was conducted between short video creators and users to measure how they perceive short videos and their empowerment potentials. Table 2 details such measures:

Table 2 MANCOVA Results for Perceived Short Video Empowerment

Variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	η^2
Dependent variable						
More self-esteem	3,242.04	12,336	3,242.04	4,885.61	<.001	.68
More confidence	3,002.36	12,336	3,002.36	4,660.23	<.001	.67
Express view	3,010.61	12,336	3,010.61	4,474.60	<.001	.66
Gain critical skills	3,253.02	12,336	3,253.02	4,853.89	<.001	.68
Play a role	3,053.51	12,336	3,053.51	4,613.06	<.001	.66
Sense of existence	2,936.25	12,336	2,936.25	4,483.18	<.001	.66
Aware of achievement	3,008.76	12,336	3,008.76	4,695.56	<.001	.67
Covariate						
Education		72,330		1.18	.312	.004
Residence area		72,330		9.65	<.001	.028

Table 2 revealed that creators reported significantly greater levels of empowerment on all variables than users ($p < .001$), with large effect sizes ($\eta^2 = .66$ to $.68$). Specifically, “more self-esteem” was the most influential ($F(12,336) = 4,885.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .68$), followed by “gain critical skills” ($F(12,336) = 4,853.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .68$). The covariate residence area

again showed a small but significant effect ($F(72,330) = 9.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .028$), whereas education level remained nonsignificant ($F(72,330) = 1.18, p = .312, \eta^2 = .004$).

It is also evident that creators and users perceive short video empowerment differently, with creators being more enthusiastic about what short video can do for them compared to users in general. Strong evidence from the second MANCOVA test supports this difference.

In short, both MANCOVA analyses indicated that creators rated short videos' affordances and empowerment potentials significantly more positively than did users, with large effect sizes. Second, geographic residence played a minor but statistically significant role in both models, while education level had no influence.

Conclusions

The findings of this study recognize the significant contribution of short videos as a medium that connects technological affordances with empowerment potentials. Extending Gibson's (1977) theory of affordance and Freire's (1973) conceptualization of empowerment, this study clarifies how the characteristics of short videos—like their accessibility, conciseness, and audio-visual richness—facilitate both creators and users in areas of self-expression, self-realization, and social engagement. The findings reveal significant disparities in how creators and users perceive these affordances and empowerments of short videos, with creators reporting more pronounced effects across all measured dimensions.

First, the study confirms Gibson's (1977) claim that affordances are dynamic attributes that emerge through interactions between individuals and the environment within an ecological setting, where the perceived utility, experiences, and motivations are at play. Short video creators, who actively engage in content production, are more inclined to perceive the medium's affordances—such as ease of use, quick production, and audio-visual appeal—more sensitively than passive users. This aligns with the authors' (Kiesow et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023) earlier work on relational affordances, which posits that the interplay between user agency and personal experiences helps shape one's perceived affordances. For instance, video creators' ability to leverage visual storytelling (Meyrowitz, 1994) and

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emotional engagements (Noroozi et al., 2017) suggests how their active participation renders technological possibility into empowerment tools.

Second, short video creators also experience the outcomes of empowerment more intensely than short video users across all measured dimensions of empowerment. Compared to short video viewers, short video creators are more active and driven in terms of creating and sharing content online, whether as a hobby or as a means of making a living. The observed effects of empowerment among short video creators resonate with Freire's (1973) focus on self-realization and social participation. The short video creators experienced increased self-esteem, confidence, and a sense of societal impact, reflecting the four dimensions of empowerment as suggested by Thomas and Velthouse (1990): meaningfulness, competence, impact, and choice. These findings echo Leung's (2009) research on user-generated content, which links content creation to civic engagement and psychological empowerment. Users, on the other hand, demonstrated lower empowerment outcomes despite receiving educational and awareness-raising content, implying that passive consumption alone is insufficient to activate the full spectrum of empowerment processes (Zimmerman et al., 1992). This distinction underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation and proactive engagement in realizing empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Further research can explore strategies for enhancing user involvement, subsequently allowing users to achieve similar benefits as content creators. We believe the evolution from short video users to active creators may represent a critical pathway for realizing digital empowerment, enabled by platform affordances that progressively scaffold participation. This transition also democratizes Freire's "praxis"—reflection and action upon the digital world to transform it.

Geographic location has also appeared as a minor yet significant covariate, suggesting the presence of contextual circumstances influencing empowerment. For instance, creators residing in rural China may experience heightened empowerment due to limited access to traditional media platforms, as observed in Liu and Wang's (2020) study of Kuaishou users. Conversely, urban users may experience fewer constraints to information seeking, thereby lessening the relative influence of short videos. Future research should further explore how regional disparities interact with socioeconomic status in shaping empowerment outcomes.

Although its insights are useful, this research is not without limitations. The sample, drawn exclusively from China, may limit generalizability to other cultures where media regulations and social norms differ. Additionally, we faced inherent constraints in studying perceived affordances and empowerment using a survey methodology. Affordances emerged from dynamic user-platform interactions, however, surveys rely on post hoc subjective accounts. Respondents may misattribute affordances. On the other hand, empowerment manifests as lived experience (Freire, 1973), a nonlinear process of gaining voice and agency. Surveys flatten this complexity into scalar metrics. All these underscore the need for mixed-method triangulation, such as including in-depth interviews to observe affordance actualization in practice and the process of empowerment.

Speaking of scales, perhaps our biggest limitation was the reliance on single-item measures, while was pragmatically justified for this exploratory study given the absence of established scales for platform-specific affordances and digital empowerment. But it introduced critical constraints: single items struggle to capture the multidimensionality of these constructs. This risks superficial validity, reduced reliability, and inadequate granularity in detecting nuanced relationships. This research highlights the need for measurement scale development regarding affordances and empowerment with the use of short videos. Only when a complete and reliable set of scales is developed can we comfortably claim that we are beginning to understand the potentials of short videos.

Theoretically, we relied on the theories of affordances and empowerment and tried to tease out how users and creators perceived them, but the two were in essence used separately. In future research, we should try to explore theories that may allow the synergizing of the two. For example, the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) is a comprehensive model developed by Venkatesh and colleagues (2003) to explain user adoption and usage behaviors of information technologies, focusing on performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. These UTAUT's core elements may reveal why the specific affordances of short video translate into adoption and empowerment. It may also offer a systematic toolkit to dissect data, guide their analyses, and diagnose which affordances drive adoption and how they enable empowerment.

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In summary, this study contributes to the conversation around digital empowerment by demonstrating that short videos are not merely tools for entertainment but potent platforms for creators and users alike. By lowering entry barriers and amplifying emotional and visual storytelling, short videos enable a democratization of content-making in ways the traditional media cannot (Andrews & Caren, 2010; Herman & Chomsky, 2021). However, the existing empowering potentials in a medium do not necessarily guarantee empowerment outcomes. Short-form video creators' strong belief in empowerment potential highlights that its full impact hinges on active participation—a dynamic underscored by the clear divide between creators and users. To bridge this gap, policymakers and platform designers should prioritize initiatives such as easy editing features and content-creating workshops that lower barriers for making content. Lastly, this study reinforces that empowerment is not just an end goal but an ongoing process, one that flourishes when people use technology not just passively but to gain agency in today's fragmented digital world.

披露聲明

本文研究者未報告潛在的利益衝突。

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