

Chinese Douyin Sentiment about the War in Ukraine

Engagement surrounding ‘culture war’ narratives

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

This research focuses on the distribution of information about the Russia-Ukraine conflict through Douyin, the online short-video platform also known as the Chinese TikTok. It is a project that analyzes the public perception of the conflict as viewed through the social media platform.

In order to study Douyin, we formulated a list of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian keywords and queried them via the search function. We subsequently scraped the returns, some 1,000 in total. We then compared the videos containing the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian hashtags, and found that the engagement with pro-Russian videos is much greater than pro-Ukrainian, meanwhile the term Russian-Ukraine conflict is mentioned far more often than Russian-Ukraine war. Finally, the key phrase ‘counter hegemony’ has emerged in the videos with pro-Russia hashtags.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How to characterize Douyin content creators’ sentiment about the war in Ukraine?

RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS

How do people engage and share specific narratives on Douyin?

How does the hashtag of ‘justice and world peace’ in videos of both Pro-Ukraine and Pro-Russian hashtags present various characterizations?

Data collection

We collect our data by looking at queries for two general war-related keywords in the ‘search’ function. We then create our corpus by extracting hashtags from the top 1000 videos and ranking the hashtags by frequency of appearance. We are able to identify the main narratives (pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian) distributed on Douyin. There are very few pro-Ukrainian hashtags overall, therefore, we retained all hashtags we could find that support Ukraine. Ultimately, we make a graph that contains 13 pro-Russian and 5 pro-Ukrainian hashtags in Chinese Mandarin and corresponding English translations. The next step is to observe user engagement with the narratives of the war in Ukraine by looking at the sum of the likes, reposts, comments and favorites from the created dataset.

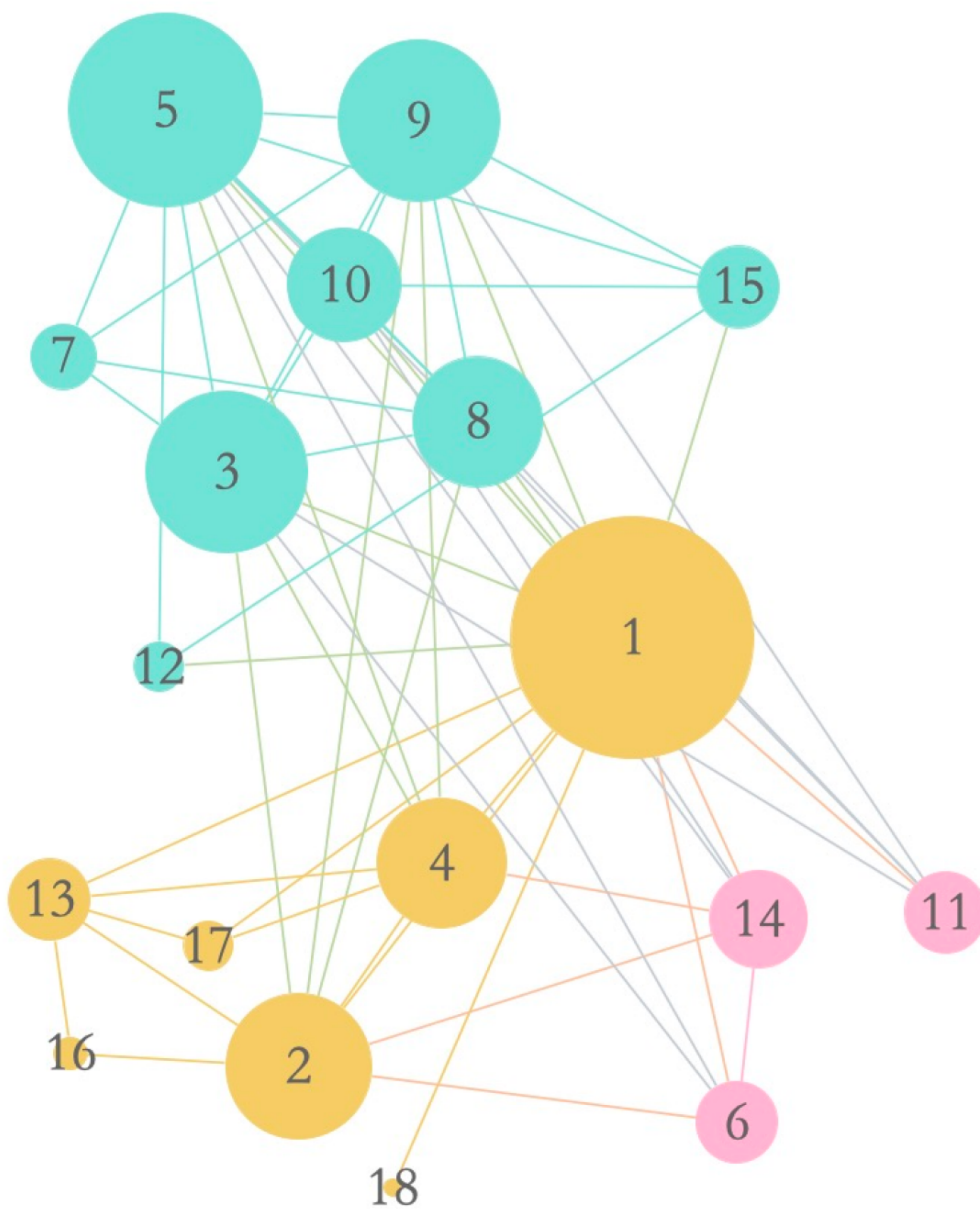
Visualisation and Analysis

To visualise our findings, we use a word cloud generator to indicate the engagement of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian, in which the larger the font size the greater the engagement. Then we undertook a co-word network analysis to display the centrality, size and linkages of the keywords. Every node represents an individual keyword and every line represents an association. We are analysing how each keyword is connected. The amount of connections each keyword has influences each node’s diameter. The more connections, the larger the node. “Russia” is in the centre of the map, which demonstrates its centrality. It is another confirmation that the pro-Russian keywords and hashtags have gained greater resonance. So in a way, most of the keywords are connected to the node, “Russia”. This can be because it is directly connected, but it can also be indirectly connected.

Findings

1. At the data collection stage, it is challenging to find pro-Ukrainian hashtags; From the word clouds, the engagement with pro-Russian videos is much greater than pro-Ukrainian. Even in videos with pro-Ukrainian hashtags most videos are pro-Russian.
2. Of all the pro-Ukraine hashtags, the one with the most positive sentiment (‘Come on Ukraine’) is the smallest of the top five; of all the pro-Russian hashtags, those that directly support Russia have far greater engagement than those which directly support Ukraine.
3. The key phrase ‘counter hegemony’ has emerged in videos with pro-Russia hashtags. There are different understandings of ‘world peace’ in videos with pro-Russia and pro-Ukrainian hashtags. For pro-Ukraine, ‘world peace’ means: stop the war. For pro-Russia it means counter hegemony and maintain world peace.

VISUALISATIONS AND ANALYSIS



Co-word Network



PARTICIPANTS

Kefeng Cao, Jinru Dong, Xinzi Xu, Xinwen Xu