

Efficacy Reconstruction of Mid-Form Video in the Multi-Screen Symbiosis Era: A Case Study of Xigua Video (Postprint)

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Abstract

Purpose: By leveraging the advantages of multi-screen environments, this study analyzes the efficiency reconstruction of medium-length videos from the perspective of content ecosystems to explore their development trends. **Methods:** Literature research and case analysis methods were employed. **Results:** It is concluded that medium-length videos reconstruct the efficiency of four aspects of the content ecosystem: content platforms, content creators, content consumers, and content marketing. **Conclusion:** Medium-length videos, represented by Xigua Video, reconstruct the “screen” landscape in terms of content platforms, creating conditions for the return of large screens and interconnectivity among large, medium, and small screens; reconstruct creative power in terms of content creators by both launching support programs to attract outstanding creators and improving the construction and services of the creative ecosystem; reconstruct user content consumption patterns and habits in terms of content consumers, alleviating manufacturers’ “content hunger”; and reconstruct marketing potential energy in terms of content marketing, fully releasing brand marketing potential through interpretive marketing and scenario-based marketing.

Full Text

Preamble

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Efficiency Reconstruction of Mid-Length Video in the Multi-Screen Symbiosis Era: A Case Study of Watermelon Video

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the efficiency reconstruction of mid-length video from a content ecosystem perspective by leveraging the advantages brought by multi-screen environments, thereby exploring the development trends of mid-length video. Using literature research and case analysis methods, the study reveals that mid-length video reconstructs the efficiency of four components within the content ecosystem: content platforms, content creators, content consumers, and content marketing. The findings indicate that, represented by Watermelon Video, mid-length video is reconstructing the “screen” landscape on content platforms, creating conditions for the return of big screens and the interconnection of large, medium, and small screens. For content creators, it is reconstructing creative forces by launching support programs to attract outstanding creators while improving creative ecosystem services and infrastructure. For content consumers, it is reconstructing content consumption habits and patterns, alleviating manufacturers’ “content hunger.” In terms of content marketing, it is reconstructing marketing potential by fully releasing brand marketing energy through interpretive marketing and contextualized marketing.

Keywords: Multi-screen symbiosis; Content ecosystem; Mid-length video; Efficiency reconstruction; Watermelon Video

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Over a decade after smartphones led the trend, the multi-screen era has arrived, driven by technological advancement. Mobile phones, computers, iPads, televisions, smart screens, watches, and various other electronic devices are accelerating their interconnection and resource sharing, forming a more open and inclusive intelligent ecosystem. The strong momentum of multi-screen symbiosis represents a burgeoning “new opportunity” for mid-length video as an emerging communication format, promising to unlock larger markets. As technology develops, the consumption of mid-length video content on television terminals is growing rapidly. Mid-length video exists not only on mobile devices but is also accelerating its entry into big screens. Currently, the usage rates of tablets, computers, and smart TVs continue to increase steadily, while the annual number of active users (households) of smart TVs and IPTV is also rising. Alongside these new channel developments, mid-length video is poised to launch its own multi-screen development phase.

This means that Watermelon Video will break through the existing domain of mid-length video, shatter barriers between large, medium, and small screens,

and usher the competition in the mid-length video industry into a new developmental stage. In this process, the impact of mid-length video on the “screen” landscape, as well as its own content consumption, creative forces, and marketing potential, all require reexamination. Mid-length video will form its unique content ecosystem.

1. Opportunities in the Multi-Screen Symbiosis Era

More than 80% of human information is obtained through the eyes [1], and “screens” serve as the medium through which people perceive information. In the 1980s and 1990s, the primary “screens” for obtaining information were television, newspapers, and radio. With the deepening integration of the three networks (telecommunications, broadcasting, and the Internet), IPTV, social networks, smartphones, iPads, and other mobile terminals have become increasingly proficiently used by people. Individuals can now conveniently use mobile networks, watch videos, read news, and engage with Weibo and WeChat. Smartphones, tablets, and other emerging mobile terminals have expanded from the study to the living room, bedroom, buses, subways, outdoors, and virtually everywhere in life. Moreover, these screens are not necessarily static; they may be mobile or take diverse forms. Different devices and displays can share information content through specific channels. More “screens” have entered human living and working environments, and the era of multi-screen symbiosis has quietly arrived, causing significant and profound changes in media forms and communication patterns [2]. In this era, mid-length video will achieve greater development.

2. Mid-Length Video in Response to the Times

At the Watermelon PLAY Curiosity Conference, Ren Lifeng, President of Watermelon Video, first proposed the concept of “mid-length video,” defined as any content ranging from 1 to 30 minutes. Although 2020 is regarded as the “first year of mid-length video,” this format is not entirely new. Among the more than 500 animated films produced by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio since its establishment, approximately 80% have a duration of 30 minutes or less. In a sense, these animations are classic examples of mid-length video, representing not only the culture of their times but also segments of wonderful history. Through 4K restoration, these classic animations can better serve contemporary users and even influence future generations, providing both content and emotional support for mid-length video to capture the “opportunity window” in the multi-screen era. In 2021, Watermelon Video partnered with Volcano Engine, an enterprise-level technology service platform under ByteDance, to launch the “4K Restoration Plan” for classic mid-length videos. By 2022, the two parties will jointly restore 100 classic animations, including *Black Cat Detective* and *Adventures of Little Carp*. The restored animations can be viewed for free on multiple screens, including Watermelon Video and the “Fresh Time” smart TV product, comprehensively connecting and serving a broad user base with great convenience. Both new videos and restored classics possess unique value, and

it is foreseeable that high-quality mid-length video will better demonstrate its value and serve more user groups with new technological support.

This journey is not exclusive to Watermelon Video; it is shared by all stakeholders and consumers of mid-length video. In the multi-screen symbiosis era, mid-length video platforms represented by Watermelon Video will embrace multiple screens, focus on building a new content ecosystem, create larger stages for creators, and consequently provide users with rich and diverse content.

3. Efficiency Reconstruction of Mid-Length Video on the Content Ecosystem

In the multi-screen symbiosis era, mid-length video has emerged as a formidable force, achieving qualitative leaps in both traffic effectiveness and content impact. Together with short-form and long-form video, mid-length video forms a “tripartite balance.” Led by major platforms such as Watermelon Video, mid-length video has brought new transformations to the “screen” landscape and its own creative forces, content consumption, and marketing potential. Its application value, commercial value, and social value have achieved high-level integration and multi-dimensional enhancement, with the content ecosystem moving toward greater prosperity, health, and sustainability.

Short-form video has changed how different entities connect and interact, forming a unique short-form video content ecosystem [4]. As mid-length video develops, it has, to some extent, deconstructed and reconstructed this established short-form video content ecosystem, thereby forming its own unique content ecology. From a macro perspective of Internet new media content ecosystems, Du Zhitao divides the constituent elements of content ecosystems into producers, platforms, and content itself [5]. Peng Lan directly clarifies that centralized platforms in the new media era have redefined the relationships among content production, distribution, and consumption, arguing that these four elements together constitute a new composite content ecosystem [6]. Based on these scholars’ perspectives, this paper divides the mid-length video content ecosystem into four dimensions: content platforms, content creators, content consumers, and content marketing. The following sections will specifically analyze the efficiency reconstruction of mid-length video across these four dimensions.

3.1 Content Platforms: Big Screen Return and Three-Screen Interconnection

According to data from the National Radio and Television Administration’s program ratings big data system, in 2020, the boot-up rate of domestic radio and television had bid farewell to the downturn of a decade ago and began to show growth. A research report from TrendForce indicates that this will be a global development trend—in the first half of 2021, global TV sales will increase by approximately 10%, reaching a five-year high [6]. Meanwhile, Xiaomi and Huawei have been vigorously developing the “medium” screen segment repre-

sented by PADs, continuously launching new products. The big and medium screen markets—particularly those represented by televisions—that were previously considered to be under pressure are now regaining people’s attention.

The Return of Big Screens. The quiet revival occurring upstream in the industry can also be observed downstream in consumer behavior. Beyond the dazzling array of short-form videos, an increasing number of users are beginning to pursue professional and practical mid-length video content. Video is no longer merely a form of entertainment but also a means of information acquisition, with users seeking information density and a sense of knowledge “gain.” Downstream users are simultaneously sending new “trinity” demands and instructions upstream to video creators and midstream platforms: mid-length video duration, premium content represented by knowledge, and a seamless viewing experience across large, medium, and small screens. In August 2021, knowledge-based videos by Watermelon Video creator Li Yongle accounted for over 50% of total plays on television terminals across all channels. Watermelon Video data also shows that by the second quarter of 2021, consumption time of mid-length video content on television terminals had reached 35% of total viewing time. These two sets of numbers demonstrate to platforms and creators the popularity of platforms and works when new user demands are met. This marks the beginning of new opportunities and the return of big screens.

Interconnection of Large, Medium, and Small Screens. When the concept of “mid-length video” was first proposed, this content format was clearly defined. At the 2021 PLAY Curiosity Conference, Watermelon Video expressed its intention to further explore and support the distribution of mid-length video on big-screen terminals represented by smart TVs. Mid-length video has achieved a leap from “defining its core” to “expanding its boundaries.” Short-form video content of 30 minutes or less is not a “gap format” between long-form and short-form video but rather a common content format that transcends carriers and has existed on television for a long time. From this perspective, the space for mid-length video extends far beyond mobile phones—it can embrace multiple screens and achieve interconnection among large, medium, and small screens. Realizing the migration of mid-length video from small to big screens and breaking barriers between different screen sizes cannot be achieved by scattered creators alone but requires holistic promotion by responsible and visionary platforms. Ren Lifeng also stated that future revenue from the Mid-Length Video Partner Program will include traffic from television terminals, which will support creators in producing more video content that meets the quality requirements of big screens. Additionally, Watermelon Video has engaged in deep cooperation with equipment manufacturers and operators, now launching mid-length video services on 80% of smart TVs, set-top boxes, and cable TV devices nationwide. This demonstrates that Watermelon Video is striving to establish a new mid-length video content ecosystem characterized by interconnected large, medium, and small screens—this interconnection provides creators with larger stages, while more high-quality creators offer rich and diverse content to users across multiple screens.

3.2 Content Creators: Comprehensive Support and Vibrant Creative Energy

The multi-screen symbiosis era also signifies new traffic entry points and promotional options for content creation, adding numerous overlapping revenue streams. Previously, many excellent creative works were primarily distributed on small screens (mobile phones). Watermelon Video's increased investment in big-screen distribution means this content gains new channels, with carriers across large, medium, and small screens being connected, allowing high-quality content to achieve broader distribution. An increasing number of creators and Multi-Channel Network (MCN) agencies are choosing mid-length video as a new option, leading to a “hundred flowers blooming” across various vertical content fields. According to data from the *Mid-Length Video 2021 Development Trends Report*, the number of monthly active creators of mid-length video on Watermelon Video, Douyin, and Toutiao grew by over 80% year-on-year, with content volume increasing by 98% year-on-year, distributed across lifestyle, knowledge, and interest-based vertical segments. In 2021, more than 13 million creators joined the platform, with ten-thousand-fan creators publishing over 180 million videos and million-fan creators publishing over 20 million videos [8].

This accelerated entry and active output of creators reflects deep recognition of the “expert” identity label. Compared to short-form video, mid-length video has a higher proportion of Professionally Generated Content (PGC). Creators themselves need to possess knowledge and literacy in a particular field, as well as the creative capacity for in-depth content, to produce excellent quality works. Consequently, creators can derive stronger creative satisfaction from broader and more professional creative spaces. Creators also actively participate in support programs launched by platforms. As of October 2021, the “Mid-Length Video Partner Program” jointly launched by Watermelon Video, Douyin, and Toutiao had attracted over 9 million registered participants, offering creators from different fields and circles opportunities to stand out. Through creators' efforts and platform support, a batch of blockbuster videos has rapidly emerged, with more than 93,000 videos reaching ten-million-level playback and over 1.6 million videos reaching million-level playback. “Content is king” remains the core rule of the mid-length video track [8], which will attract more professional creators with original aspirations, determination, craftsmanship, and perseverance to join, focusing on the depth, breadth, and expressiveness of content. This injects continuous vitality into the development of the mid-length video content ecosystem and represents the fundamental basis for the stable and long-term development of mid-length video.

The “Partner Program Ambassador Activity” is an invitation program for high-quality video creators launched by Watermelon Video, aimed at providing users with high-quality content. To meet user demands, the “Mid-Length Video Partner Program” has been released, and the “Partner Program Ambassador Activity” will provide professional content review mechanisms and a comprehensive content management system for users. To enhance user experience, the

activity will continuously improve user experience, including providing account construction, bullet comments, interactive stickers, and other features. Watermelon Video also integrates with the CapCut App, supporting rapid upload of CapCut videos, which brings new opportunities for the playback of the “Mid-Length Video Partner Program.” Ren Lifeng expressed his hope that through the “Mid-Length Video Partner Program,” a richer range of expressive opportunities can be brought to mid-length video creators, showcasing their talents. As the “golden age” of mid-length video arrives, both platform investment and user demand continue to grow.

3.3 Content Consumers: Potential Unleashed and Content Consumption Satisfied

From the perspective of video content consumption, user demands are undergoing significant shifts. As times evolve, users increasingly demand content that is deep, professional, comprehensive, thoughtful, and insightful. They hope to acquire more knowledge, broaden their horizons, enrich life experiences, and cultivate personal interests through a more precise sense of “gain.” Based on this, mid-length video is seeking more “landing points” beyond mobile screens, reconstructing users’ content consumption habits through interconnection across large, medium, and small screens.

Although mobile terminals have the potential to fully utilize mid-length video content resources, they still face many challenges. For instance, they cannot fully demonstrate the professional quality, sophisticated technology, and excellent picture quality of mid-length video, limiting its application scope. Additionally, many viewers still prefer using large displays, making it difficult to reach them through mobile-only distribution. Users may be more willing to watch with family members, enjoying higher-quality, uninterrupted immersive experiences. Such immersive experiences provide users with tremendous convenience beyond the limitations of relying solely on smart devices, enabling free switching between home, work, and travel scenarios. Finally, the integration of mid-length video can significantly alleviate manufacturers’ “content hunger syndrome,” allowing them to share the massive high-quality content and traffic brought by mobile Internet without being bound to traditional content production mechanisms. Mid-length video is poised to become a “shot in the arm” stimulating the transformative development of the television industry.

3.4 Content Marketing: Unique Models and Strong Marketing Potential

From a commercial and marketing value perspective, mid-length video can provide greater possibilities for advertising creativity and brand cultivation through better viewing experiences, more moderate information increments, richer integration scenarios, and stronger emotional intensity, allowing brand marketing content to be fully unleashed [9]. In terms of marketing methods, mid-length video content marketing features two distinctive models: first, in-depth analysis,

where senior producers and creators comprehensively and profoundly examine customer purchasing behavior, bringing objective and accurate market feedback to enterprises; second, scenario-based integration, where corporate products or services are embedded into customers' daily experiences to strengthen their feelings and stimulate shopping interest.

In the collaboration case between Li Auto and Watermelon Video creator “Wen Yifei’ s Emergency Finance,” Wen Yifei utilized his signature style to profoundly explain Li Auto’ s unique advantages from a scientific perspective. The video content featuring “industry dry goods + brand placement” is highly innovative and incorporates bold ideas, not only meeting advanced learning requirements of viewers but also effectively achieving precise brand promotion. This helps enterprises gain good market reputation and make clear market judgments. With technological development, “content field” video has become an important channel for content marketing, significantly enhancing enterprises’ market competitiveness. The emergence of “content field” video has launched a new model of integrated content marketing, helping enterprises understand corporate culture, core essence, product experience, and application experience while bringing long-term, meaningful value promotion. As mid-length video becomes more popular, many well-known enterprises have begun leveraging this “free ride” user base for effective brand promotion. According to data released by the Giant Star Map platform, in 2021, the number of creators joining Giant Star Map grew by 62%, order volume increased by 200%, and the growth rate of creators achieving monetization for the first time exceeded 65.3%. Ren Lifeng announced that in 2020, Watermelon Video and Douyin jointly launched a new mid-length video growth plan aimed at motivating more talented users to participate in commercial content production. This initiative not only brings broader market space to enterprises but also helps promote the vigorous development of China’ s video market.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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