

A Study on the Dissemination of Short Videos by Mainstream Media from the Perspective of Media Events: The Case of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Post-print)

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Abstract

Well-organized and orchestrated media events can unite people in a communal form, achieving strong effects in consolidating collective sentiment and integrating social order. [Purpose] To provide references and insights for mainstream media to enhance their communication capacity and forge social centripetal force. [Method] Analyzing short video reports by mainstream media during the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China from three dimensions: reporting format, discourse strategy, and platform distribution strategy. [Result] Explores the short video communication strategies of mainstream media in reporting media events. [Conclusion] Finds that short videos by mainstream media are characterized by concise and diverse formats, discourse that integrates reason and emotion, and cross-platform, precision-oriented distribution.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Collaborative Journal: Research on Short Video Communication of Mainstream Media from the Perspective of Media Events –A Case Study of Short Videos on the 20th CPC National Congress
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Abstract

Deliberately organized and orchestrated media events can gather people in the form of a community, achieving powerful effects in consolidating collective sentiment and integrating social order. [Purpose] This study aims to provide

references for mainstream media to enhance their communication power and forge social cohesion. **[Method]** We analyze short video reporting by mainstream media during the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China across three dimensions: reporting format, discourse strategy, and platform distribution tactics. **[Results]** The study explores short video communication strategies for mainstream media coverage of media events. **[Conclusion]** The findings reveal that mainstream media short videos feature concise and diverse formats, discourse that balances emotion and reason, and cross-platform, precision-oriented distribution.

Keywords: media events; short videos; mainstream media; 20th CPC National Congress coverage; communication strategies

Traditional ritualistic media events serve three major functions: integrating public attention, disseminating mainstream values, and constructing collective memory. Since political requirements for public attention possess legitimacy and the consensus values they represent carry loftiness [1], and the audience reach of short videos aligns with the scale needed for cultural governance communication, using short videos to construct media events holds significant importance in mainstream media communication. Media events, through orderly organization and planning, transform public participation in social reality from experiential contact with the objective environment to trans-spatiotemporal “presence” achieved through the information environment. This shift transcends individual perspectives while simultaneously generating strong “sense of participation” and “sense of connection” between numerous individuals and the event itself, gathering people as a community to achieve intense collective sentiment consolidation and social order integration.

Media events are typically premeditated by media organizations with strong social cohesion and maintenance capabilities, giving them a certain degree of recognition before occurrence. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (hereinafter referred to as the 20th CPC National Congress), a conference attracting nationwide attention, created an excellent opportunity to fully interpret the Party’s major theoretical achievements to people of all ethnic groups, showcase China’s great achievements in the new era, and strengthen the “centripetal force” of social communication. Leveraging the inherent attention advantage of the 20th CPC National Congress and the increasingly significant influence of short videos on media event production and consumption, this study examines how mainstream media utilized short videos to propel coverage of the 20th CPC National Congress into a collectively focused media event.

1.1 Theoretical Evolution of the Concept of Media Events

In contemporary new media environments, the term most closely connected to “media events” should be “new media events” [6]. Qiu Linchuan and Chen Taowen emphasize that research on “new media events” can be viewed as a response to

issues such as media publicity and social transformation [4]. The core of new media events is no longer media events per se, but rather approaches network public events more closely. Tang Yi, Deputy Director of the New Media News Department at China Media Group's News Center, believes that as a national-level new media platform, CCTV News has planned and constructed a series of "new media events" through converged media reports such as the "September 3rd Online Military Parade," the "2019 Qingming Festival #RememberingPeopleThroughObjects #TopicCollection," and "Farewell to Academician Yuan," which have triggered widespread attention in the public opinion field and highlighted the dominant role of new media communication channels and the public in dissemination [5].

In academic examinations of mainstream media short videos, existing research often focuses on how mainstream media leverages short videos to transform and enhance communication power in the converged media environment. During this process, mainstream media emphasizes innovation in short video production across thinking, content, and communication channels. For instance, some researchers have analyzed the strategic layout of mainstream media entering the short video space, proposing development strategies that adhere to the core value of quality content, establish diversified communication channels, and improve the precision of communication [6]. Other studies examine how mainstream media employs short videos for international communication, collecting and analyzing feedback questionnaires from international students in China to investigate the cross-impact of factors such as duration of stay in China, short video viewing frequency, and short video content from different media on these students' cognitive dimensions of China's national image [7]. Additionally, some research addresses the regulation and management of short video communication, analyzing the construction of short video communication evaluation systems in the context of media convergence. For example, Wang Wenbin, Zhou Ying, and Ma Zhanying, starting from the importance and necessity of constructing a mainstream media short video communication evaluation system, explain the research background, approach, principles, and pathways for building a short video converged media communication evaluation system at China Media Group's National (Hangzhou) Short Video Base, proposing that constructing a short video communication evaluation system that upholds mainstream value orientation while balancing scientificity and practicality is essential for media convergence development [8].

2. Reporting Forms of Mainstream Media Short Videos: Concise and Diverse, Bridging Ritualistic Distance

The creation of "presence" is the pathway through which media events transcend spatial boundaries and enable audiences to collectively generate national identity and pride [9]. As technology and environments continuously evolve, more intense, profound, and authentic "senses of presence" can be created. The "presence" brought by live video streaming only realizes individual "immediate

viewing” of events from specific perspectives, maintaining a certain distance from audiences. Moreover, the traditional impression of mainstream media reporting as singular and serious 无形中 increases this “distance,” necessitating media with flexible and diverse reporting forms to continuously bridge this gap—making short videos crucial for mainstream media in constructing media events.

2.1 Multi-format Reporting: Rich Audio-Visual Content Enhances Connection Mainstream media short video reporting forms are relatively flexible and diverse. In short videos released by mainstream media for the 20th CPC National Congress, the most numerous and primary formats include graphic summaries, on-camera explanations, live Q&A, and Vlogs. Taking on-camera explanations and live Q&A as examples—these highly interactive short video formats are frequently used to answer questions of high public concern. Vlog-style short videos feature strong personal characteristics, employing first-person narrative perspectives and continuous shooting techniques to provide audiences with more authentic “presence,” often used to showcase behind-the-scenes footage and camp exploration content with strong entertainment value. For example, the *Changsha Evening News* series “Focus on the 20th CPC National Congress · I’m On-Site Vlog” follows a logical timeline from departure to the conference and post-conference summary, forming a logical closed loop that provides audiences with presence and participation. This clever collision between the “presence” demonstrated by journalists and news objectivity, combined with first-person narration and “non-professional” shooting angles, brings “you” and “me” closer together, gathering participants across screens for a “live” experience.

In modern communication practice, the “audience-centered” communication logic has already replaced the “sender-centered” logic [1], making audience information reception preferences and habits critical factors for successful information dissemination. Flexible and diverse reporting forms appeal to rich audio-visual materials to reconstruct news content, not only closely connecting with viewers’ senses and influencing their abstract perceptions and behavioral judgments, but also utilizing comprehensive audio-visual presentations to “perform” events before audiences from multiple angles and dimensions, increasing audience participation. Simultaneously, it maximizes satisfaction of different audience preferences, similar to “casting a wide net for precise fishing,” expanding the number of people who pay attention to and invest in media events, thereby constructing a media event for the mobile internet era.

2.2 Concise Reporting: Capturing Attention Resources with Brevity and Substance The essence of the media economy is the attention economy [10]. American scientist Goldhaber refers to the “attention economy” as a crucial scarce resource in information dissemination, making it a significant driver of network economic development [11]. In the digital age, the growth of content and channels resembles a blowout, with the increasingly sharp contradiction between unlimited content supply and limited attention resources becoming the

primary contradiction in the attention market [12]. This requires video producers to attract user attention within the shortest possible time. The concise reporting style of mainstream media short videos adapts well to audience cognition and behavioral patterns driven by attention.

Taking CCTV News short videos on the 20th CPC National Congress as examples, CCTV News carefully selected President Xi Jinping' s live speeches from the congress, creating creative short videos of “golden quotes” that condensed report essence within “100 seconds and 100 words,” releasing concise videos such as “*Five Major Principles, Understand in One Video*” and “*Understand the Five ‘Only Paths’ the Entire Party Must Remember in One Video.*” These optimized the structural form of the information carrier itself by meticulously extracting originally lengthy reports and texts, delivering concentrated “dry goods” in short, explosive outputs that rapidly formed cognition in viewers’ minds, maintained audience freshness and sustained discussion, and optimized viewing experiences, achieving total playback volumes exceeding 300 million.

3. Discourse Strategies of Mainstream Media Short Videos: Balancing Emotion and Reason to Enhance Emotional Identification with Events

Major media events possess awe-inspiring historicity and ritualism. The primary purpose of using the 20th CPC National Congress as an opportunity to construct media events is to leverage massive communication effects to advance national identity building, national consensus consolidation, and national pride stimulation. However, this serious event content seems to conflict somewhat with the current entertainment-oriented tendency of short videos. This requires mainstream media to adopt discourse strategies that balance emotion and reason in short video production—moving people with emotion to stimulate emotional resonance while convincing them with reason to maintain professional reporting standards.

3.1 People-oriented Topic Selection: Breaking Traditional Impressions of Mainstream Media Reporting In the mobile internet era, media has transformed into an equal channel for audiences to spontaneously and actively enter events [13]. Mainstream media short videos emphasize people-oriented topic selection, standing from the audience’ s perspective to express authoritative information in ways that people enjoy. Across various short video platforms and clients, one can see diverse and people-oriented topics such as delegation life records, pre- and post-conference camp explorations, and front-line journalists interpreting behind-the-scenes stories—maintaining professional requirements while innovating discourse forms. For example, *China Daily*’ s bilingual news Vlog on Douyin, “*What Are Those Foreign Journalists Covering the 20th Congress Busy With?*”, received 191,000 likes. The Vlog follows reporter Xiaopeng into the news work scene, showing her conversations and selfies with foreign journalists, asking about their focuses and work progress. This not only

brings audiences into the venue through the camera but also generates strong national pride through foreign journalists' praise and expectations. Although the video topics are more grounded and durations significantly shortened, they still maintain the essential characteristics of authenticity and objectivity.

Some core content in 20th CPC National Congress videos involves professional report summaries and key interpretations, such as the graphic short video "*Study Notes on the 20th CPC National Congress Report*" released by *People's Daily*. This video transformed report key points into the popular "bullet journal" format among contemporary youth, combining graphics and text with audio-visual elements to concisely summarize 14 key questions including "What is the theme of the 20th CPC National Congress?" and "What three major events have we experienced in the past decade?" enabling rapid comprehension and dissemination among the public. In terms of depth, breadth, and warmth, this approach overcomes the aforementioned shortcomings.

3.2 Appeal to Emotion and Symbolic Expression: Empowering Consensus Values for Social Integration Symbolic signs contain analogical and associative meanings. Media harness and utilize symbolic signs to generate symbolic interaction behaviors, continuously communicating and reinforcing the symbolic meanings of things—serving as "an important tool for generating shared emotional experiences and shared historical memories" [14]. When producing videos on the 20th CPC National Congress, mainstream media leveraged the symbolic attributes of specific signs such as patterns, costumes, natural landscapes, and cultural landscapes through large-scale, concentrated reporting and discussion, helping subtly strengthen national pride, promote group identification, and thereby construct media events.

Taking multiple short videos continuously released by CCTV News as examples, such as "*The 20th CPC National Congress Report Points Out That the Entire Party Must Remember the 'Five Only Paths'*" and "*The 20th CPC National Congress Report Points Out That on the Path Forward, We Must Firmly Grasp the 'Five Major Principles'*", these videos edited together symbolic images of China's towering mountains, flat overpass bridges, skyscrapers reaching into clouds, fluttering Five-Star Red Flags, and people of all ethnic groups in traditional costumes holding hands and laughing—symbolizing China's prosperous development and people's unity and peace. Accompanied by President Xi Jinping's steady and powerful discourse and strong rhythmic background music, these videos used symbols and emotions as bonds to stimulate audiences' patriotic feelings and achieve value empowerment for national identity.

4. Platform Distribution Strategies of Mainstream Media Short Videos: Cross-platform and Precise, Creating Resonance Effects

Media platformization and platform mediatization have become normalized in contemporary communication [15]. Scholars such as van Dijck refer to today's platform-operated society as the "platform society"[2]. Mainstream media adopts

cross-platform, differentiated distribution strategies, comprehensively utilizing popular platforms including “Two Micros and One Client” (Weibo, WeChat, and news clients), Douyin, Kuaishou, and others for resource distribution. By leveraging each platform’s utility and complementary matrix effects, they create resonance effects and achieve cross-spatiotemporal gathering at the group level within the “platform society” of information explosion, forming media events at scale.

4.1 Cross-platform Distribution: Advance-planned Omni-media Communication Enhances User Reach During coverage of the 20th CPC National Congress, mainstream media insisted on synchronizing distribution and pushing short video reports across social media platforms to construct an integrated omni-media communication matrix. On October 26, 2022, *People’s Daily’s* official account simultaneously released a short video of Zhang Guimei being embraced by students upon returning to her girls’ school on Sina Weibo, Douyin, and Kuaishou, garnering approximately 752,000 total likes across the three platforms. This omni-media communication matrix covers different audiences across various social media platforms, with the same audience experiencing repeated information exposure across different platforms, effectively enhancing audience reach rates for mainstream media short videos.

Platform operation is achieved through systematic collection, algorithmic promotion, and communication circulation [16]. Before conducting cross-platform distribution, mainstream media conducts advance planning based on different channels’ operational characteristics, adjusting the types of short videos released and accompanying copy. Comparing *People’s Daily’s* short video releases on Sina Weibo and Kuaishou reveals two key differences. First, platforms have distinct posting differences. Due to audiences’ long-standing perception of “viewing graphics and text on Weibo, watching videos on Kuaishou,” mainstream media adjusts resource allocation accordingly—for instance, favoring in-depth videos on Sina Weibo while releasing more diverse and people-oriented short video content on Kuaishou.

Second, mainstream media adjusts release copy based on different platforms’ traffic distribution strategies. Although neither platform dominates traffic allocation—with traffic equally held by dispersed user groups and content exposure depending on mutual follow relationships among platform users [3]—Sina Weibo’s public domain traffic is increasing daily and exists under strong control, disseminating through hot searches and recommendations. Consequently, *People’s Daily* posts long copy with hashtags on Sina Weibo to capture private domain traffic while increasing topic exposure, subsequently landing on the “hot search topics” list to seize public domain traffic and effectively enhance communication impact.

Considering each platform’s distinct characteristics, mainstream media’s advance planning strategies for cross-platform distribution diversify operational methods and resource allocation. This approach satisfies platform audiences’

personalized needs while leveraging excellent content quality to firmly capture audience attention and enhance communication effectiveness.

4.2 Precise Distribution: Interaction Between “Decentralization” and “Re-centralization” Currently, “audiences increasingly influence media public opinion, making media pay greater attention to audience needs” [16]. Openness and sharing have gradually become communication trends through “decentralization.” However, decentralization disperses and fragments public attention, while media events require gathering audiences together. As mainstream media on different platforms, they release “tailor-made” short video works based on their platform audiences’ characteristics, acting as opinion leaders to “re-centralize” audiences around them.

For example, Yangshipin (CCTV Video), as an official and serious client with broad and diverse audience coverage, released relatively formal special topics such as “20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” “Exclusive Chuanxilu Videos,” and “Current Affairs Micro-Records” from authoritative perspectives, reporting and interpreting the 20th CPC National Congress across multiple levels and broad fields. As a local media outlet, Shanghai Media Group’s audience consists primarily of Shanghai locals, so its “Kankan News Knews” launched the characteristic “Striving Shanghai” section, attracting local viewers through greater relevance to local people’s lives and promoting “serving the people is Shanghai’s eternal theme.”

However, when the same mainstream media distributes short videos across different platforms, the widespread phenomenon of “one draft, multiple submissions” reduces their appeal. Additionally, it is important to note that excessive “re-centralization” in platform distribution may also trigger audience resistance, requiring mainstream media to maintain balance in media power between audiences and media during the re-centralization process.

In the short video era, large-scale media events play a vital role in concentrating fragmented public attention and consolidating social cohesion. Mainstream media short videos should maintain close interaction with the public through richer content perspectives and concise external forms, achieve emotional resonance and identification through people-oriented topics and professional interpretations, and leverage platform advantages for high-coverage, precise distribution. By continuously optimizing communication methods and approaches, short videos can become an important form of public opinion guidance in the new era, enabling the public to develop collective identity through grand event experiences and allowing collective emotions to spread to every corner of people’s lives.

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