

The Impact of Current Affairs Vlogs on Television News from the Perspective of Intertextuality Theory: Postprint

Authors: Lan Gang

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Abstract

[Objective] By analyzing the characteristics of political Vlogs in terms of narrative subject, structure, perspective, mode, and scene, this study explores their practical significance and influence as a form of personalized journalism.

[Method] Employing intertextuality theory, this paper investigates how political Vlogs expand and extend television news across three dimensions: reporting hierarchy, reporting modality, and reporting tone.

[Result] The research finds that political Vlogs extend the social value and communication functions of television news, manifested primarily in the expression of subjective cognitive information, enhanced user experience through immersive reporting, and enriched content selection via commonality effects.

[Conclusion] Strategies to enhance the interaction between political Vlogs and television news include strengthening copyright protection to clarify infringement boundaries, innovating reporting forms to excavate news value, and developing distinctive themes to extend the communication matrix.

Full Text

The Impact of Political Vlogs on Television News from the Perspective of Intertextuality Theory

Zhejiang University of Technology Zhijiang College, Shaoxing, Zhejiang 312030

Abstract

[Objective] By analyzing the characteristics of political Vlogs in terms of narrative subject, narrative structure, narrative perspective, narrative mode, and

narrative scene, this study explores their practical significance and impact as a form of personalized journalism. **[Method]** Using intertextuality theory, the paper examines how political Vlogs expand and extend television news from three dimensions: reporting hierarchy, reporting pattern, and reporting “temperature.” **[Results]** The study argues that political Vlogs extend the social value and communication functions of television news, primarily manifested in the expression of subjective cognitive information, enhanced experience through immersive reporting, and enriched content selection through empathetic effects. **[Conclusion]** Measures to strengthen the interaction between political Vlogs and television news include strengthening copyright protection to clarify infringement, innovating reporting forms to excavate news value, and creating distinctive themes to extend communication matrices.

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The unique communication value of Vlogs is positioning them as the next major trend and growth space for traffic dividends. As Vlogs enter the political domain, their media logic and communication significance are influencing the production methods and communication strategies of television news.

1. Personalized Journalism: The Attribute Positioning of Political Vlogs

Reporting political news in Vlog form signifies diversification in news production types and formats. Influenced by media attributes, political Vlogs serve dual functions of social media and content construction. On one hand, they must meet the needs of news distribution and content services, reporting news through video while adhering to journalistic values, strengthening agenda-setting from an objective perspective, and reporting political facts rationally. On the other hand, they must satisfy users’ social needs by creating strong “personal branding” to attract audiences and building relatively stable “loose-circle” social connections through shared emotional experiences—connections that are neither too intimate nor too distant.

These two contradictory communication demands constitute the journalistic attributes of political Vlogs, reshaping the understanding of “journalistic objectivity.” Unlike traditional television news, political Vlog reporters intervene in news events with an “innate sense of right and wrong,” unabashedly expressing their own opinions, emotions, and attitudes in their reporting. Their

content is filled with distinct personal colors, reflecting facts in unique ways and through internet-native concepts. Consequently, their narrative framework is characterized by personalized narrative expression, where individuals not only dominate content themes but also construct story logic centered on audience needs. The selection, creation, and development of topics must satisfy social interaction needs, and the narrative mode allows audiences to engage in direct and in-depth contact with narrative subjects within news stories.

The social function of political Vlogs ensures a balance in their journalistic tension, requiring them to be both “watchable” and “enduring,” possessing both “breadth” and “depth,” “temperature” and “thickness,” “sense of presence” and “appeal,” while maintaining commitment to journalistic professionalism. Based on these characteristics, political Vlogs can be regarded as a form of personalized journalism.

2. Narrative Presentation of Political Vlogs

With the popularization and acceleration of 5G technology and major platforms vigorously developing the Vlog sector, the user base of Vlogs is rapidly expanding, reaching 600 million by the end of 2022. This massive user scale and promising media prospect has endowed political Vlogs with distinctive narrative features.

2.1 Narrative Subject: Documentary Style with Personal Imprint

In traditional news production models, reporters are required to conceal their own viewpoints, emotions, positions, and attitudes, restoring news scenes and events from a third-person objective perspective as professionals. This results in limited space for personal style display and creates a certain sense of alienation from audiences. “Sharing” is the core label inherent to Vlogs. The development of mobile communication technology makes Vlog content production more like “co-creation” between communicators and audiences, where the complete meaning of the text is collaboratively constructed through the author’s initial production and users’ active reproduction. Vlogs carry strong personal styles, and personal emotions inevitably merge into the reporting. The “I-centered” narrative mode places certain demands on the reporter’s personal charisma and role positioning. Professional judgments of factual contradictions and conflicts sometimes have to give way to personalized display and humanized reporting approaches.

For instance, CCTV’s *Wuhan Observation* Vlog series and the *Wuhan Diary 2020* created by Vlogger “Spider Red Bread” both use first-person colloquial expressions to record different groups observed and various experiences felt during the city lockdown. This new form of journalism, filled with the photographer’s concepts and emotions while containing numerous elements peripheral to the news theme, represents what Guy Debord considered “a visible spectacle displayed, as well as a subjective, conscious performance and show.” Vloggers’ diverse production subjects and simple, intensive production processes determine their

unique cultural foundation and distinct cultural genes. The flexible scene adaptability of Vlogs blurs the boundary between private scenes and public spaces, while the interactive social mobility of Vlogs dissolves the distinction between communicators and audiences, making them better suited to the current demand for autonomous, fragmented reading modes.

2.2 Narrative Structure: “One-Shot” Documentation

Currently, Vlog shooting equipment includes not only smartphones, professional cameras, GoPros, tripods, selfie sticks, radio microphones, and handheld gimbals, but also frequently employs drones. Improvements in professional equipment strengthen the core position of “documentary quality” in political Vlogs. To embody this documentary quality, political Vlogs often adopt a “one-shot” style in their narrative structure. The so-called “one-shot” refers to the design and scheduling of narrative time and space to simulate, stitch, or present a complete narrative thread within a single shot space.

The “one-shot” technique satisfies the narrative requirements of “vertical screens,” meaning that extensive use of “long takes” within vertical space can relatively completely record overall segments of news events. The extensive use of long takes in political Vlogs maintains the integrity and continuity of news records. Although a considerable portion of long takes are filled with a sense of dullness and slowness, creating temporal conflicts with rapidly changing news events, the tension between different subjects and elements within the same shot greatly expands the narrative extension of political Vlogs.

In the *Farewell! Fangcang Hospital* Vlog released by CCTV, the 7-minute-and-31-second program used numerous long takes to reflect the final night at Fangcang Hospital, from leisurely and relaxed medical staff to empty hospital beds to a few scattered cured patients waiting for discharge, recording the emotions and warmth of ordinary heroes on the front line of the anti-epidemic fight. In the final 2 minutes and 21 seconds, the program completed a continuous, fluid narrative space through lens displacement and scene pushing and pulling, featuring the reporter’s selfie monologue, medical staff waving goodbye, and the exterior view of Fangcang Hospital, presenting a truly touching scene.

2.3 Narrative Perspective: Parallel Observation Under Equal Communication

Narrative perspective is the angle and standpoint from which a story is told. It not only provides possibilities for observing issues but also contains factual judgments, value orientations, and explicit or implicit emotional tendencies. The narrative perspective of Vlogs is a limited perspective, where the narrator or characters in the story tell the story through a first-person lens perspective. Compared to the macroscopic, all-knowing omniscient perspective and the purely objective perspective that uses third-person as a starting point to observe the world, obtain information, and explain information, political Vlogs

feature reporters or hosts appearing as bloggers, recording and introducing on-going news facts from a first-person narrative perspective. This allows audiences to personally experience news event scenes alongside the blogger, as if all news facts are happening right before their eyes, thus maximizing the restoration of news authenticity while driving audience emotions and creating a strong sense of presence.

Therefore, the reporting language of political Vlogs is significantly different from television news, primarily using daily colloquial language along with extensive internet-native language. In the *Dan Che Goes to the Meeting: Xu Danru's Two Sessions Vlog* series, screen language such as “Brainstorming in progress for Two Sessions, do not disturb, consequences at your own risk” and the “memes” left in each Vlog about different topics not only add interest to serious Two Sessions reporting but also increase topic socialization, enhance audience participation in political topics, strengthen the communication power, appeal, and influence of reporting, and improve audience attention to news.

2.4 Narrative Mode: Non-linear Narrative Under Audience Empowerment

Unlike the centralized, theme-focused linear narrative of television news, the narrative mode of political Vlogs does not advance according to the development and evolution of time but rather relies on the interlacing of time and space as the basis for story development. This non-linear narrative leads to diversity in the narrative modes of political Vlogs, which can both center on a core news event and open up numerous peripheries on the margins of news events. These peripheries enrich the levels and content of news events, three-dimensionally constructing the height and sides of news reporting.

For example, the Vlog *This Is What You Haven't Seen, and I Haven't Seen Even More: No. 4 Fuxing Road* released by Xinhua News Agency intersperses numerous personal memory fragments, old photos, and documentary videos, conducting past-present comparisons of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC from different sides and angles, comprehensively displaying the image of the International Department and greatly shortening the distance between ordinary people and this mysterious department.

As a social medium, the microcosmic, fragmented non-linear narrative mode reflects the strong postmodern style of Vlogs. Vlogs adopting non-linear narrative focus more on the permeation power of content and social tension—that is, whether the content can expand and consolidate audiences' social networks and whether it has value as social conversation material. The resulting communication chain, although insufficient to touch upon the entire process and complete picture of facts, enhances the appeal and influence on audience groups and leaves more room for independent thinking.

2.5 Narrative Scene: Social Performance with Backstage Frontstage

American sociologist Erving Goffman believed that society and life constitute a large stage that can be divided into frontstage and backstage. The frontstage is the performance occasion where audiences see and obtain specific meanings, presenting an image acceptable to others and society. The backstage is the place where preparations are made for frontstage performances and where things that cannot be performed frontstage are concealed. According to this view, news production scenes can also be divided into frontstage and backstage. News production preparation processes such as interview procedures, methods, sources, raw materials, and content processing belong to the “backstage,” which traditionally does not appear in news products. The “frontstage” is the packaged, completed news products and topics that audiences expect to see, with the backstage serving as preparation for frontstage performance.

The social function of Vlogs makes scene “another core element of media after content, form, and social interaction.” Therefore, political Vlogs feature numerous reports with frontstaged backstage. For instance, Xinhua News Agency’s *Revealing Vlog—Reporter’s One-Click Wardrobe Change & Daily Reporting* enriches the content meaning and subsequent value of news products by focusing on how reporters change outfits for different reporting occasions and other stories behind news stories, enhancing the function of the news agenda.

Moving news production “backstage” behaviors and preparation scenes to the frontstage breaks down barriers between news production and audiences, transforms the production process from closed to open, extends the news value chain, enriches news production scenes, enhances news production transparency, and helps improve news credibility, meeting new demands from audiences for news production in the mobile media era. The overloaded information capacity in the mobile media era affects audiences’ information reception and processing abilities. Non-transparent information not only increases reading burden but also makes it more difficult to grasp valuable information and core content. Frontstaging the backstage, by appropriately opening the news production process, can “disenchant authority while also granting individuals’ private scenarios more possibilities for integration into public scenarios.”

3. Expansion and Extension of Television News by Political Vlogs

French semiotician Julia Kristeva proposed intertextuality theory in the 1960s, which posits that “every text is a mirror of other texts; every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts. They reference each other, involve each other, forming an infinitely potential open network, thereby constituting a massively open system of texts’ past, present, and future.” Intertextuality theory emphasizes that any text inevitably contains other texts, and the interaction and influence between different texts jointly construct discourse order and intervention in social processes. With the development of media technology and

evolution of media ecology, particularly in the mobile media era, intertextuality theory has been endowed with broader interpretive space and richer meaning characteristics. The traditional concept of textual boundaries no longer exists; the generation and interpretation of any textual meaning are temporary and unstable, constrained not only by other texts but also influenced by other audience concepts.

In contrast to television news, audiences' viewing behaviors toward political Vlogs appear casual on one hand, with attention and interest points in a highly active state. On the other hand, fragmented reading behaviors, algorithmic recommendations, and personalized customization can outline individuals' special textual experiences and viewing practices. The essence of intertextuality is the fusion of different texts, mainly manifested as formal commonality. Political Vlogs, as a form of personalized news reporting, seem to be "self-conscious" reporters' narratives of their own observations and feelings. However, in fact, their textual meaning influences other texts such as television news. Especially when reporting on the same information source, the texts of political Vlogs and television news intersect, correlate, reference, and rely on each other, each innovating in expression methods and presenting facts more richly and three-dimensionally. In specific reporting practices, the same news event is presented in both political Vlogs and television news, with audiences flowing between different texts and meaning proliferating through continuous interpretation, expanding the textual field and helping achieve intended social purposes while enhancing and extending the social value of political Vlogs and television news. However, since political Vlogs and television news operate according to their own logics, either separately or in parallel, audiences may develop biases in their understanding of news importance or causal relationships.

3.1 Reporting Hierarchy: Expression of Subjective Cognitive Information

Television news reporting is divided into three levels. The first level is basic reporting, including event overview reports, dynamic news, and investigative analysis of news facts. The second level is comprehensive reporting, which presents grand themes through a macro narrative perspective, highlighting intrinsic values and significance. The third level supplements the second level by reflecting grand themes through typical characters and events, and can thus be regarded as a reverse reporting of the second level. Correspondingly, news reporting information can also be divided into news information, background information, and subjective cognitive information. Subjective cognitive information represents the content producer's understanding and judgment, including commentary, discussion, explanation, and expression of emotions, with strong suggestive and guiding effects. According to the principle of objectivity in news value concepts, subjective cognitive information in television news is placed after factual reporting, with its usage space and scope greatly compressed.

The mass communication characteristics of television news make it difficult to

address the needs and questions of some audiences when presenting news content and telling news stories. The screening and interpretation of news information sometimes reduce the pertinence of news reporting. Vlog news belongs to personalized news reporting, where topic selection, content production, and observation angles are based on ordinary audiences' needs. In specific reporting, information and reality are mainly conveyed from personalized perspectives, sharing event scenes, insights, cognition, experiences, and judgments with audiences in the first person, using individuals' stories and experiences as entry points and clues to report major news events or explain newly introduced regulations and policies. This process inevitably incorporates subjective cognition, but such information is more experiential and therefore brings more authentic, delicate, and profound impact, reflecting the audience's subject status and consciousness and thus easily gaining audience attention.

3.2 Reporting Pattern: Immersive Reporting Enhances Experience

Political Vlogs mostly record event development and restore real scenes from a first-person perspective, with highly humanized characteristics that can create an immersive experience of “psychological presence”—where audiences are placed within story plots and characters, participating in story roles or events and becoming part of the news story.

Immersive experience is achieved by finding down-to-earth perspectives and accessible language to report serious political topics, breaking through the serious narrative style of television news and becoming more market-oriented, realistic, and accessible to general audiences, making political news more acceptable to ordinary audiences and shortening the psychological distance with them. The generation of immersive experience requires both subjective psychological state feelings and objective environments created by external systems. In the new technological environment, the use of panoramic VR and virtual 360-degree scenes in Vlogs, combining psychological presence with real-scene cross-screen display, enriches media attributes and enhances audience experience.

3.3 Reporting Temperature: Empathetic Effects Enrich Content Selection

Currently, political Vlogs increasingly focus on expressing themes through micro perspectives such as typical characters, key details, and scenes, emphasizing the excavation of new value from complex facts and resonating with audiences at deeper levels. Since Vlog narrative mode is “I-centered,” the produced news is no longer aimed at the so-called “mass” in the mass communication era but rather at “community-type masses” based on individual preferences, spatial or situational needs. These “community-type masses” are vastly different from the broad masses targeted by television news. Such “masses” have different information needs, understandings, and judgments, with the ability to transform media ecology and news scenes and intervene in news practice. What connects these “masses” is emotion, making the creation of empathetic effects the primary

determinant of political Vlog success. The Vlogs of CCTV' s Li Hong and Wang Bingbing, and Xinhua' s Danrui and Zhang Yang, can win high click rates and numerous comments and bullet chats. Beyond content and themes, the empathetic effects created by personal brand image, role positioning, and humanized characteristics are the main factors influencing audience viewing.

4. Recommendations for Interaction Between Political Vlogs and Television News

Providing services to users based on scenarios is the essence of mobile communication. As a self-media personal expression and communication form centered on individual performance and viewing based on content, Vlogs are increasingly active in the political field, particularly in major news reporting, becoming part of all-media reporting. They not only fill gaps in television news content reporting but also feed back into television news in terms of language style and narrative form. Therefore, strengthening the interaction between political Vlogs and television news can enrich news reporting forms, enhance news theory construction, and further leverage the efficacy and communication strength of political news.

4.1 Strengthen Copyright Protection and Clarify Infringement

Producing political Vlogs requires professional capabilities in script writing, post-production editing, and voice-over music. Therefore, besides some self-media individuals, a considerable number of political Vlog producers come from traditional news production institutions. The same information sources and topics are often used by the same team for both Vlogs and television news. Professional content production teams collaborate efficiently in processes such as creativity, interviewing, topic selection, shooting, music, editing, distribution, and cooperation, ensuring regular and timely program release. However, compared to television news, Vlogs face great “uncertainty” in copyright protection.

On April 25, 2021, at a press conference held by the State Council Information Office, the leader of the Publicity Department' s Copyright Administration stated when discussing copyright protection in the video field: “The problem of infringement and piracy in short videos (Vlogs) is relatively serious, strongly reflected by rights holders and attracting social attention.” For some political news, especially reports on sudden, disastrous, and major events, political Vlogs' click rates and repost rates far exceed those of television news. Therefore, unauthorized use, reposting, or secondary editing for dissemination to attract attention and traffic are common occurrences.

The main reasons are as follows: First, the definition of plagiarism and infringement is relatively vague. Although the Copyright Law of the People' s Republic of China provides principles for evaluating plagiarism and infringement benchmarks, element composition, and plot factors, it lacks specific standards and evaluation methods. Beyond simple brute-force reposting, various “manuscript

washing” behaviors such as using technical means to modify parameters or video frame rates, changing sentences, and imitating original ideas and thematic expressions have not been clearly defined, lacking corresponding identification mechanisms. In terms of rights protection, the long cycle, high cost, and great difficulty lead to insufficient enthusiasm for investment, production, and operation of political Vlogs among some traditional news production institutions. Second, the continuous increase in new media information volume in recent years has placed higher demands on new media communication workers’ information screening capabilities. If new media communication workers lack this ability, various types of information can easily run rampant, causing adverse effects on communication order.

To enhance the construction of political Vlogs, besides further clarifying infringement and plagiarism behaviors in laws and regulations, it is necessary to go beyond the logic of information text technology management and strengthen information flow management logic. Various video platforms and public account producers and operators should respect originality and shall not implement editing, cutting, reposting, or dissemination of relevant works without authorization, ensuring that political Vlogs grow healthily in a benign and orderly competitive environment.

4.2 Innovate Reporting Forms and Excavate News Value

Using Vlogs for news reporting helps transform the overly serious reporting forms of traditional political news. However, political Vlogs are inferior to television news, which has multiple gatekeeping mechanisms, in terms of authenticity control. To avoid negative effects caused by false news, some political Vlogs either simply record behind-the-scenes activities, preliminary preparations, or personal feelings. This supplementary descriptive reporting of core news facts lacks innovative expression and makes it difficult to deeply excavate and analyze the essence of news. Additionally, the entertainment-oriented reporting forms adopted to cater to viewing demands can easily lead to the absence of journalistic professionalism.

The duration of political Vlogs is about 2-3 times that of message-type television news, generally 4-10 minutes. Strengthening innovation in political Vlog reporting forms should fully utilize this small-feature-film-like duration to excavate news facts, reveal factual essence, and analyze “news behind the news.” Strengthening in-depth reporting in political Vlogs, conducting reasonable topic selection and planning beforehand on issues of audience concern, macroscopically grasping narrative logic, accurately reporting factual truth, and objectively presenting development trends can not only expand public opinion influence and establish an authoritative reporting image but also, due to distinct reporting subjects, rich forms of expression, and large capacity, satisfy both audience reading habits and curiosity and facilitate the extraction of richer news value through three-dimensional organization of news elements, enabling comprehensive and systematic presentation of news connotations.

4.3 Create Distinctive Themes and Extend Communication Matrices

“Fragmented” reporting can no longer satisfy audiences’ upgraded reading consumption needs and society’ s demand for high-quality content resources. Currently, most political Vlogs are successful as individual breakthroughs but have not yet formed full-line development. The so-called “behind-the-scenes” and “tidbits” account for too much content in various political Vlogs, already affecting the competitiveness of political Vlogs as news products. For political Vlogs to achieve broad influence and communication power, grasp the initiative in public opinion guidance, and perform correct public opinion interpretation and reporting functions, they require narrative subjects with strong abilities in guiding public opinion and keen perception in controlling news content. Focusing on audience resonance points, creating distinctive themes through unique analysis and expression from high-level and new-angle perspectives, deeply cultivating vertical fields of political reporting, extending reporting depth and topic breadth, and excavating new reporting focal points can help promote core socialist values, tell good era-themed stories, satisfy audiences’ psychological and emotional needs for multi-scenario viewing and personalized use of political Vlogs, and enhance audience trust and stickiness with political Vlogs.

In today’ s era of communication fragmentation, producing different types and styles of content for different platforms according to various audience characteristics has become an inevitable trend in media development. Although the non-linear narrative logic, internet-thinking reporting style, and interpersonal social interaction of political Vlogs are unmatched by television news, television news’ s reputation effect, professional image, and authoritative status formed over many years are what political Vlogs cannot replace in the short term. Therefore, combining political Vlogs with television news to create a communication matrix for political news content production practice and form an aggregation effect can not only enhance television media’ s influence in the new public opinion field and strengthen the construction of high-quality content resources but also leverage the social media value and social influence of political Vlogs, establishing the brand image of political Vlogs.

Currently, media convergence transformation is developing in depth. Exploring the impact of political Vlogs on television news is conducive to increasing the proportion of Vlogs in political news reporting, promoting innovation in political Vlog reporting methods, further leveraging the immersive and three-dimensional reporting advantages of political Vlogs, expanding their influence, and providing more new paths for diversifying political news reporting forms.

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

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