

How TV News Media Can Achieve “Traffic Reconstruction” in the Mobile Short Video Era: Postprint

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Abstract

With the commercialization of 5G, an era of mobile short videos is approaching gracefully. 5G networks are characterized by low latency, high speed, and large capacity, and the commercialization of 5G, the coverage of 4G, and the popularization of smartphones have occurred almost simultaneously. Their mutual reinforcement has profoundly transformed the landscape of news (information) dissemination, where everyone is not only a user but also a disseminator and, more importantly, a producer. As long as one possesses a smartphone and connects to the internet, virtually anyone can have their own “channel” and “column” with zero barriers to entry, resulting in a deluge of short videos flooding the internet and a cacophony of voices. On the other hand, the moat of television, which was built on barriers such as license issuance and heavy asset investment, is quietly collapsing. In an effort to reclaim their lost discourse power, television journalists have been striving continuously. As short videos have become one of the primary channels for people to obtain information, the competition for short videos in the media sector is bound to intensify. At this juncture, the deep cultivation and strategic deployment of television news media in the mobile short video domain is both pragmatic and urgent.

Full Text

How Television News Media Can Achieve “Traffic Reconstruction” in the Mobile Short Video Era

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Abstract: With the commercialization of 5G, an era of mobile short videos is approaching. Characterized by low latency, high speed, and large capacity, 5G networks—together with widespread 4G coverage and smartphone proliferation

—have profoundly transformed the information communication landscape. Everyone simultaneously functions as a user, disseminator, and producer. With just a smartphone and internet connection, nearly anyone can operate their own “column” or “page” at zero threshold, resulting in a flood of short videos and a cacophony of voices online. Meanwhile, the traditional television moat built on licensing and heavy asset investment is quietly collapsing. To regain lost discourse power, television journalists have been making continuous efforts. As short videos have become a primary channel for information consumption, competition in the media sector will inevitably intensify. At this critical juncture, the deep cultivation and strategic deployment of television news media in the mobile short video domain represent a realistic and urgent imperative for genuine “traffic reconstruction.”

Keywords: integrated media; 5G; television media; short video layout; video production

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1. Why Do People Like Short Videos Today?

According to Tian Yulong’ s introduction at a State Council Information Office press conference, two years after 5G commercialization, China has built the world’ s largest 5G standalone network, with 961,000 5G base stations deployed and over 400,000 shared base stations promoted, connecting 365 million 5G terminals. By the end of 2020, all prefecture-level cities in China had achieved full 5G network coverage. This not only signifies rapid development in network infrastructure and devices but also illuminates the future path for the short video industry. Enabled by technology, the news communication field has undergone dramatic transformation. A September 2020 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 53% of American adults obtain news through social media, accounting for more than half of respondents. Among eleven options, the top three social media platforms were Facebook (36%), YouTube (23%), and Twitter (15%). In China, where the number of internet users has approached one billion, the 47th Statistical Report on China’ s Internet Development released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) shows that as of December 2020, China’ s internet user population reached 989 million, with 99.7% (986 million) accessing the internet via mobile devices. The short video user base stood at 873 million, representing 88.3% of all internet users [1]. Short video usage has become habitual, with statistics indicating that among all online audiovisual

applications, short videos rank first with an average daily usage of 110 minutes per person [2], establishing them as a primary source of public information.

1.1 Network-Native Evolution: The Advancement of Content Forms

As communication technology evolved from 1G to 5G, content forms in media and the internet have correspondingly iterated. During the 1G and 2G eras, mobile phones were primarily used for calls and text messages—the golden age of print and broadcast media. The 3G era brought faster networks, popularizing images, music, video streaming, and social networking. 4G enabled high-quality transmission of 3D images, ushering in an explosion of mobile gaming, HD video, short videos, and live streaming. In the 5G era, cloud gaming, XR, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and other IoT applications will become mainstream.

Short videos, typically one to five minutes long, have emerged as a new cultural form and mode of expression unique to the mobile internet era. Compared to text and images, short videos incorporate richer elements—integrating text, sound, imagery, and animation into a comprehensive audiovisual experience. Sound alone encompasses synchronous audio, ambient sound, music, and sound effects. Unlike images that guide visual perception or radio that extends auditory experience, short videos synthesize these modalities, engaging visual, auditory, and even tactile mechanisms to achieve the “greatest common denominator” of communication.

Unlike traditional television programs, short videos represent not merely a reduction in duration but a revolution in production methods and philosophy. Originating from personal life documentation, they favor private expression and fragmentary structures, employing a casual, 原生态 (raw and authentic) approach that emphasizes emotional rendering. Due to their limited duration, short videos exhibit a distinct “de-depthification” characteristic, offering users a light viewing experience and relatable moments of recognition.

Today, television stations no longer compete primarily with other TV stations, newspapers, portals, or search engines. Their competitors are short video giants like Douyin and Kuaishou with massive user bases, mobile social platforms like Weibo and WeChat with hundreds of millions of users, and highly interactive, strongly 黏性 (sticky) communities like Bilibili, Douban, and Zhihu—essentially all traditional media, new media, video production organizations, and individual users capable of producing and providing content. To regain lost value and return to the center of public discourse within this vast traffic pool, television news media must intensively cultivate the mobile short video field, achieving genuine “traffic reconstruction” through evolving connections with users.

1.2 Speed and Immediacy: Information On-Demand

Short videos represent a new channel for information dissemination, capable of concisely transmitting substantial content and enabling high-speed information

flow. They offer significant advantages in information propagation, entertainment, and satisfying people's thirst for knowledge. As modern society accelerates, fragmented time constitutes an increasing proportion of daily life. With typical durations of one to five minutes, short videos can be watched anytime, anywhere, filling users' fragmented temporal and spatial gaps.

1.4 Expanding Boundaries: The Dimensional Upgrade of Content Value

Short video content categories are remarkably diverse, encompassing news, social hot topics, life documentaries, fashion trends, skill sharing, public welfare education, knowledge dissemination, comedy, entertainment, street interviews, and more. Tracking and analysis reveal that their content boundaries continue expanding, with vertical content in these 细分 (niche) domains building moats against user attrition. Meanwhile, users' motivations for watching short videos have gradually shifted from killing time to seeking more valuable experiences.

1.5 Strong Interactivity: Express and Share at Will

Short videos possess social attributes, allowing users to create and upload content anytime. The ability to comment and interact while viewing satisfies people's need for communication and expression. Scholars have analyzed that netizens love short videos because they represent a de-eliticized form of self-expression, enabling mass carnival and providing a new virtual stage for free and equal social interaction [3].

2. Where Are the Opportunities for Mainstream Media to Build a New Content Value System?

2.1 Amplifying Advantageous Resources to Enhance Traffic Efficiency

Regardless of technological development or media landscape changes, the principle and system of Party media management in China remain constant. Authoritative information, represented by government resources, is a scarce resource that always commands attention. As the mouthpiece of the Party and the people, mainstream media's core advantage lies in its exclusive rights to release and interview authoritative information and events. In recent years, major celebrations such as the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up, the 70th anniversary of the PRC, and the 100th anniversary of the CPC have provided mainstream media with unique access as primary interviewers at these events and 时政 (current political) scenes, responsible for systematic coverage. On July 1, 2021, the CPC centennial celebrations were broadcast live nationwide by CCTV, with journalists from provincial-level and above media participating in on-site reporting—a distinctive advantage and valuable news resource. Synchronized resonance characterizes CCTV's various media channels. Beyond televi-

sion broadcasts, CCTV simultaneously produces and distributes short videos, H5 pages, and long videos, with meticulously edited short videos of core scenes going viral.

The program *Anchor Comments on News* represents a successful attempt to expand the mouthpiece function' s traffic. *Xinwen Lianbo* anchors record short videos using relaxed, lively language to comment on daily major events, evoking audience resonance and transmitting viewpoints and values, sparking a trend of anchor-delivered news. *Chang' an Avenue Insider*, winner of the 30th China News Award for famous columns, has transformed from a new media brand of Beijing Daily Newspaper Group into a 时政 (current affairs) influencer with over 25 million subscribers across platforms in its six years of operation. Leveraging Party newspaper advantages and focusing on 擅长的 (expertise in) political topics—including national leaders' activities, speeches, and social focal points like anti-corruption—the outlet has transitioned to short videos in recent years, requiring its editorial team to both write and shoot [4].

2.2 Social Credibility: Connecting Brand with Trust

Social credibility is a media organization' s ability to win public trust. Unlike many new media platforms backed by capital and commercial operations, mainstream media has possessed public service attributes since its inception, bearing greater social responsibility and stronger credibility. Although the mobile internet era features massive, complex information and unprecedented challenges in public opinion guidance, mainstream media' s credibility remains vibrant, demonstrating irreplaceable value during special periods. Professor Zhang Hongzhong' s team at Beijing Normal University studied information dissemination during the COVID-19 outbreak, with data analysis showing that compared to interpersonal communication and self-media, netizens trusted official channels most during the pandemic, which exhibited significantly higher credibility [5]. This is corroborated by the communication effects of pandemic reporting: *Xinwen Lianbo* ratings increased 130% compared to 2019, and 38 provincial-level and above radio and television institutions' official Weibo accounts gained an average of nearly 600,000 followers in February 2020 alone [6]. This stems from mainstream media' s long-established credibility in information dissemination and content control, which can be extended to the short video domain to naturally build trust between new media brands and netizens.

2.3 Quality Content Production: Forming Emotional Connections with Users

Currently, the average production quality of short videos tends toward rawness and roughness. As volume grows, demand for refined content will inevitably increase, presenting opportunities for mainstream media. Television news media' s short video content currently focuses on several categories: hot event tracking, thematic figure profiles, political commentary, and positive energy stories. Adapting to new media production patterns, these short videos predominantly

focus on individuals, 挖掘 (excavating) human stories to highlight emotional resonance and forge connections with users. After all, only heartfelt alignment can generate lasting attention, making quality content production and refined operation key to attracting and retaining users. For instance, during the 2020 Qixi Festival, Jiangsu Broadcasting Corporation's integrated news center's *News Eye* column launched the short video *Fourth Marriage Certificate Finally Kept! Flood Relief Commander Fulfills Promise*. The video focused on a heroic commander who had postponed his marriage registration three times due to frontline flood relief duties. When his fiancée suddenly appeared at the flood site after traveling over 1,000 kilometers, the tough soldier broke down in tears and promised: "I'll marry you when I return!" After the flood receded, he kept his promise. The emotionally moving short video, showcasing a soldier's tender love story from a soft perspective, reached Weibo's hot search list with over 100 million topic reads, and was reposted by Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, Xuexi Qiangguo, CCTV News Weibo, and WeChat official accounts. A 19-second version on *News Eye*'s Kuaishou and Douyin accounts garnered 3.5 million views and 120,000 likes.

2.4 Content Stability: Long-Term Professional Capabilities and Technology

Mainstream television media maintains professional editorial, broadcasting, and production teams with news-gathering rights and extensive experience—these constitute content stability. For example, the 30th China News Award special prize for integrated innovation, *The Password of New China: 15666, 611612*, begins with a string of numbers. "15665, 611612" appears random but is actually the musical notation for the first line of the song *Without the Communist Party, There Would Be No New China*. Using this creative starting point, the video explains how the song was written, using its melody to evoke emotion and connect touching stories of Chinese Communists from different eras, backgrounds, and fields, vividly interpreting the core concept that the Party's leadership is China's success password. The video became a phenomenal work during the PRC's 70th anniversary coverage, accumulating 728 million plays and 1.758 billion pushes by October 9 of that year.

Additionally, gatekeeping capability is a core competency. In recent years, online content risk incidents have emerged repeatedly, with massive and complex information requiring professional, experienced teams for content risk control and gatekeeping. The listed company People's Daily has leveraged its long-standing content sensitivity and control to develop third-party content review services, using AI + human auditing to help clients vet online content covering graphics, video, online literature, music, animation, games, advertising, and operational activities. In 2018, this business revenue grew 166% year-over-year, and the company continues developing an AI-based "risk control brain" to consolidate its leadership. Conservative estimates place the total internet original content market at over 100 billion RMB, with future demand for risk control

set to expand further.

3. Key Dimensions of Viral Short Video Production

How can media organizations produce viral short videos? Sustained viral production capability certainly originates from deep media convergence. At the macro level, traditional media must build a modern communication system; at the meso level, they should construct an all-media matrix and transform operational mechanisms; and at the micro level, they need to innovate content expression, optimize products, and cultivate all-media talent proficient in new technologies and media literacy [7]. Operationally, this requires researching different short video platforms' characteristics and content needs, including audience demographics (age, region, education), video duration, orientation (horizontal/vertical), preferences, and engagement ratios (comments, shares, likes) to produce targeted content that meets differentiated demands.

3.1 Returning to Content Origins: People-Centeredness as the Foundation

What topics have viral potential? Tracing to the source, short videos possess unique cultural genes. They originated from individuals using cameras to document their lives for self-expression. From the beginning, everyday life has been their distinctive DNA—captured precisely in Douyin' s slogan “Record a Beautiful Life” and Kuaishou' s “Embrace Every Life.” As short videos have become a primary online product, we must not forget their people-centered, life-documenting origins. Professor Peng Lan' s research team at Tsinghua University' s School of Journalism and Communication studied the top 200 media and government short videos on Douyin from May to November 2018, finding that traffic/transportation scenes (“on the road”) and life rescue videos were the most common categories, while warmth and emotion were the primary feelings evoked by viral content [8]. Therefore, strong topics should be grounded in life scenarios close to ordinary people, carefully selecting subjects with human 烟火气 (human warmth) that generate user 代入感 (immersion). Even for public topics, people-centeredness should remain the fundamental expression and production approach.

3.2 Narrative Innovation: Focusing on and Amplifying Highlight Moments

Given their extreme brevity, short videos cannot be logically rigorous or comprehensive. Consequently, they must focus on highlight moments and amplify them to the maximum. Highlight moments might be a compelling scene, a golden quote, an expressive face, a contrast image, a letter, a gesture, a tear, a bow—anything that generates emotional 感染力 (resonance). Beyond video editing techniques like repetition, zoom, slow motion, and visual cues to amplify

focal points, textual language, subtitles, narrative structure, and storytelling methods can further magnify core highlights.

3.3 Front-Loading Essence: Early Release of Core Content

Traditional television programs emphasize emotional arcs with buildup and suspense culminating in climaxes. Short video logic operates inversely. In fragmented, fast-food consumption scenarios, failure to capture attention within 3-5 seconds results in users scrolling past. Leading Douyin account *Sichuan Observation* mostly posts videos under 8 seconds, while People's Daily's viral short videos with tens of millions of likes typically run 15-30 seconds. This demands front-loading essence, releasing the most eye-catching content within the first 5 seconds to maximize completion rates and user retention.

3.4 Building Persona and Interaction: Personified Account Operation

In the integrated media context, short video account operation exhibits new characteristics. Accounts should leverage their social attributes by developing personified features and establishing a persona—the public image presented to users. For example, the leading Douyin account *Sichuan Observation* under Sichuan Radio and Television calls itself “Guanguan,” frequently interacting with netizens through comments to build a persona as a keen observer for users. Though a Sichuan-based media outlet, it scans nationwide and even global events, described by netizens as “wandering around and observing everywhere.” When hot events occur, fans even urge updates, prompting the account to launch special columns like *Wandering Observation Vlog* to strengthen its persona. As of July 19, 2021, it had attracted 48.25 million followers.

3.5 Enhancing Packaging: The Core of Virality Is Driving User Emotion

Creative, eye-catching titles attract clicks, whether concise, humorous, or suspenseful, and should skillfully use trending keywords. For audio, short videos typically avoid narration, instead using music to create immersion and rhythm that effectively mobilizes user emotion and encourages sharing. Packaging can also incorporate internet-native elements like emojis and animations suited to online viewing habits. The 29th China News Award first prize winner *Secretary of Saozi Noodles* used 3D effects and MG animation to showcase “poverty alleviation logs” and “poverty alleviation creativity,” highlighting the protagonist's “Internet + poverty alleviation” achievements and making the short video more engaging [9].

4. Conclusion: In the Future, It's Not Just About Following, But Leading

In summary, television news media must employ solid strategies and decisive actions, implementing thorough reform and reconstruction from top-level design to bottom-level logic, from organizational structure to talent teams, and from content production to channel distribution, to achieve genuine “traffic reconstruction” in the mobile short video era and return to the center of the public discourse arena. In the future, television news media should not merely be followers in the short video domain but become leaders, harnessing algorithms with mainstream values, refining content with professional spirit, and reconstructing connections with innovative thinking. Only by singing the main melody amidst the cacophony of voices and transmitting positive energy in the competition for traffic can television news media fulfill its mission and responsibility in the mobile short video era.

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

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.