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A Preliminary Analysis of the Transformation of Audio-Visual Communication by Vertical Screen Short Videos in the Era of Media Convergence (Postprint)

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Abstract

The development of the era and the advancement of technology have catalyzed innovation in China's short video industry, expanding the developmental trajectory of vertical-screen short films and establishing them as the predominant paradigm in contemporary audio-visual communication. In comparison with traditional horizontal-screen imagery, the fundamental characteristic of vertical-screen short films resides in their vertical composition-based framework, which augments the expressive capacity for medium and close-up shots, consequently enhancing narrative capability and engendering a more distinctive audio-visual experience for audiences. The evolution of vertical-screen short films constitutes not merely a revolution in cinematic composition, but also generates ramifications for the communication industry. Grounded in this context, this article undertakes an analysis of the transformations that vertical-screen short films have precipitated in audio-visual communication within the integrated media era, with the objective of fostering more diversified development in the short video industry through the application of the vertical-screen short film model.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: A Brief Analysis of How Vertical Short Videos Transform Audio-Visual Communication in the Era of Media Convergence

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Abstract: The advancement of technology and the evolution of our times have spurred innovation in China's short video industry, expanding the develop-

ment pathways for vertical short videos and establishing them as the dominant mode in contemporary audio-visual communication. Compared with traditional horizontal-screen imagery, vertical short videos are characterized by their portrait-oriented composition, which enhances the expressive capacity of medium and close-up shots, thereby strengthening narrative capabilities and delivering a more distinctive audio-visual experience to audiences. The development of vertical short videos represents not only a revolution in cinematic composition but also exerts profound influence on the communication industry. This article analyzes the transformations that vertical short videos bring to audio-visual communication within the context of media convergence, hoping to inspire more diversified development in the short video industry through the application of the vertical-screen model.

Keywords: media convergence vertical screen; short video; audio-visual communication; broadcast media; short video

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The concept of media convergence has become mainstream in the development of contemporary audio-visual media, fundamentally transforming the media communication environment and continuously optimizing new forms of media transmission. In this context, short videos have emerged as an important and innovative communication method in modern society, directly influencing people's daily lives. As of June 2020, China's short video user base had reached 818 million, accounting for 87% of all internet users, with average viewing time reaching 110 minutes per person. The accelerating pace of media convergence has propelled the transformation of video content from traditional horizontal-screen to vertical-screen formats. From a physiological perspective, human vision is horizontally oriented, making horizontal videos closer to how we perceive the real world. Consequently, since the birth of cinema, various aspect ratios—including 4:3, 16:9, and the earlier 1.33:1—have all adhered to the horizontal format, establishing it as the mainstream transmission mode for television and film. However, the physical form of mobile phones and people's daily usage habits primarily favor vertical orientation. This has rendered traditional horizontal playback modes less competitive on mobile terminals, giving rise to vertical-screen content designed to accommodate users' portrait-mode holding patterns. Under the backdrop of media convergence, numerous short video social platforms such as TikTok and Kuaishou in China have begun promoting vertical short videos,

which have gained widespread popularity among the public. Initially created through spontaneous user-generated content, vertical short videos have since been actively explored by media companies and news organizations as a viable mobile communication format. In the current era of media convergence, vertical-screen imagery has become the primary mode of video playback, bringing more innovative and meaningful changes to the media landscape. This article focuses on analyzing the transformations that vertical short videos bring to audio-visual communication in this context.

1. Analysis of Audio-Visual Language in Vertical-Screen Imagery

Audio-visual communication is gradually shifting from large-screen and horizontal-screen modes to small-screen and vertical-screen formats. Audio-visual language itself possesses symbolic characteristics, where the combination of sound and image forms relatively complete information. In the era of media convergence, video transmission patterns are transitioning from traditional horizontal dissemination to vertical dissemination.

1.1 The Impact of Vertical Composition on Audio-Visual Communication

Compared with horizontal composition, vertical composition offers less expansive field of view but features more concentrated visual domains. However, this narrowed perspective can create a more focused visual effect, enabling cinematographic composition to be more expressive and making content more prominent. Consequently, vertical frames are more expressive in content presentation. Vertical composition places human subjects in primary positions within the frame while de-emphasizing the surrounding environment, thereby highlighting character images and enhancing visual impact. In application, vertical-screen composition often portrays human portraits, which is why it is referred to as “portrait mode” in the film and television industry, whereas horizontal composition, with its relatively broader field of view, is known as “landscape mode.”

1.2 Shot Type Analysis in Vertical-Screen Imagery

Vertical-screen imagery de-emphasizes distant content, which passively weakens the expressive capacity of long shots and medium long shots. Compared with horizontal-screen imagery, the narrowed field of view in vertical short videos can highlight the main subject, enabling audiences to quickly grasp visual information. Vertical-screen imagery extensively employs medium shots to portray characters, environments, body movements, and clothing, while using close-ups to capture facial expressions, actions, and mental states. For instance, when users take selfies with their phones, they frequently adopt vertical composition and primarily use close-up shots [1]. Overall, vertical-screen imagery is better suited for the mixed application of medium and close-up shots to more meticu-

lously represent daily life, helping creators express content and satisfying public communication needs in the era of media convergence.

1.3 Analysis of Camera Movement

Camera movement can expand the field of view, enrich the dynamism of images, and diversify expressive forms. Camera movements include push, pull, pan, tilt, handheld rotation, and high-speed photography. In vertical short video production, most users shoot by holding their phones directly. Due to the relatively narrow perspective of vertical-screen imagery, shooters often employ horizontally-held panning movements to more fully introduce character environments, enriching the visual information in videos. Camera movement in vertical videos can construct more engaging frames and deliver unique visual experiences to audiences. For example, in the microfilm *When I Meet You*, director Zhang Yimou arranged the narrative on a train, using top-to-bottom vertical tracking shots to depict the differentiated characteristics of three passengers returning home, thereby enhancing narrative effectiveness.

2. The Role of Vertical Video Applications in Audio-Visual Communication

2.1 Convenience

Users spend most of their mobile phone time in vertical-screen mode, and most smartphones are designed for vertical holding. Smartphones have incorporated numerous additional functions, video viewing being one of them. From both physiological habit and mobile design perspectives, vertical holding represents the more commonly used phone operation mode. For horizontal viewing, users must first rotate their phones horizontally, after which the video image also rotates to horizontal orientation. This process increases the complexity of switching between different interfaces and significantly reduces convenience when using other applications simultaneously, resulting in a suboptimal viewing experience.

2.2 Compatibility with Visual and Psychological Experience

Excellent short videos can fully express impact and emotional resonance, creating viewing empathy. Their visual impact can deliver immediate pleasure to audiences while transmitting information more intuitively. Emotional appeal can generate psychological resonance among viewers. Vertical videos can effectively integrate these two aspects. Analysis of vertical video presentation reveals that while limitations increase in the use of long shots and medium shots, vertical display enhances the sense of enclosure in videos, thereby increasing audience engagement to some extent. Simultaneously, it provides users with a more immersive experience, presenting content in full-screen format that magnifies details and delivers stronger emotional impact, enabling audiences to achieve emotional resonance.

2.3 Replicable Collective Imitation Characteristics

Against the backdrop of continuous technological development, users can add various special effects during video shooting, enriching short video content. Virtual scene templates provide space for replication and imitation by other users. In the fragmented information era, the short video industry has gained favor and recognition from modern audiences. Vertical short video content possesses absolute advantages in dissemination. For example, TikTok's comic transformation special effect became popular online, spawning countless costume transformation videos. This prompted various application platforms to successively launch similar transformation effects. The application of various special effects and props, combined with fixed music and dialogue patterns, increases creative innovation while lowering the threshold for user participation and imitation, thereby enhancing public engagement.

3. Development Paths for Vertical Short Videos in the Era of Media Convergence

3.1 Emphasizing PUGC Content Production

The current short video market remains in its early stages, with UGC (User-Generated Content) products dominating the market. However, the quality of most vertical short video works needs improvement. While relatively high-quality PGC (Professionally-Generated Content) works exist, they suffer from relatively long production cycles and update intervals that cannot satisfy public demand. Therefore, it is necessary to combine the breadth of UGC with the depth of PGC to construct PUGC (Professional User-Generated Content) video products. This approach addresses the issue of long update cycles in PGC while avoiding severe content homogenization in UGC. In developing vertical short video platforms, it is essential to encourage PUGC production [2]. By adjusting content and optimizing push mechanisms, user experience can be enhanced, creating a win-win situation.

3.2 Using Short to Promote Long and Strengthening Inter-Platform Cooperation

Currently, vertical short videos alone cannot satisfy platform monetization needs. Both long and short video formats require innovative cooperation models to achieve organic integration of vertical short videos and horizontal long videos, enabling more diversified commercial development across multiple platforms and channels. For example, in the traditional video industry, television broadcasters can collaborate with vertical short video platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou to broadcast news in vertical format. This expands audience reach while enhancing the influence of traditional media. Conversely, if short video platforms can introduce official television stations, they can similarly improve their own content quality.

3.3 Technology Empowerment to Enhance User Experience

The development of 5G technology has dramatically increased internet speeds, providing innovative development opportunities for short videos by enabling scene switching across time and space at will, thereby enriching user experience. Additionally, the explosive growth in data transmission rates and capacity has enhanced interpersonal interactivity, with numerous innovative technologies providing better support for vertical short video development. The vertical development model of video transmission has also spurred technological updates in the film and television industry, with equipment such as vertical-screen stabilizers, more convenient and flexible tripods, and vertical-screen beauty lights being widely adopted [3]. Therefore, in developing the vertical short video industry, it is necessary to rely on technology as a foundation, strengthen technology empowerment, and transform technology into innovation drivers to achieve industry-wide creative development.

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

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