

A Comparative Analysis of Short-Form and Long-Form Video Content: Postprint

Authors: Zheng Tingting

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Abstract

The diversified nature of short videos has established them as the most widely consumed media format in contemporary video consumption, with low-cost production and streamlined content serving as key hallmarks. Conversely, long-form videos necessitate specialized production teams and deliver relatively comprehensive and profound content to audiences over extended durations. This article conducts a comparative analysis of current short-form and long-form videos across three dimensions—production, consumption, and impact—examining their differences, advantages, and characteristic features in each respective aspect.

Full Text

A Comparative Analysis of Short Videos and Long Videos

Author: Zheng Tingting (Inner Mongolia Radio and Television Station, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia 010050)

Abstract: The diversified characteristics of short videos have made them the most widely consumed media format today, marked by low-cost production and concise content. Long videos, by contrast, require professional production teams and deliver relatively complete and profound content over extended durations. This paper compares and analyzes contemporary short videos and long videos across three dimensions: production, consumption, and persuasive power, examining their respective differences, advantages, and disadvantages in each aspect.

Keywords: short video; long video; production; consumption; persuasive power; comparative advantages

Video presents continuous content of certain value to audiences through media, with different names arising from various media and content forms. For

instance, long videos include television dramas, films, operas, musicals, variety shows, etc., while short videos encompass mobile app platform videos, TV commercials, MTV, and similar formats. Video has a long developmental history, particularly long videos, which are generally believed to have emerged with the advent of television and cinema, primarily comprising content with complete narratives and extended playback times such as TV dramas and films. Short videos have also existed for a long time, exemplified by advertisements and MTV broadcast on television. With the development of internet technology, especially the popularization of smartphones as mobile internet terminals, short videos have experienced explosive growth. Currently popular platforms such as Kuaishou, Douyin, and QQ Short Video have been launched by nearly all major social media platforms. According to statistics from a relevant big data enterprise, by the end of 2018, the number of internet users reached 829 million, among which mobile phone users accounted for 817 million, and short video users numbered 648 million, representing a usage rate of 78.7%. These figures demonstrate that China's internet user base has exceeded half of the total population, with the vast majority accessing the internet via mobile terminals, and most mobile users browsing short videos. This remarkable data reflects not only the inherent appeal of short videos but also their expanding influence and revenue-generating capacity, which society continues to promote.

1. Production Comparison Between Short Videos and Long Videos

Comparing short videos and long videos from a production perspective encompasses two aspects: production costs and content creation. The primary factor causing significant cost differences is that long videos require professional production teams, whereas short videos can be produced by any individual. Regarding content creation, the functional positioning and video characteristics differ substantially between the two formats, resulting in considerable content disparities.

1.1 Production Costs

In terms of production costs, long videos inevitably exceed short videos. First, regarding financial costs, long videos require professional teams for production, including screenwriters, cinematographers, special effects artists, musicians, and dozens of other specialized roles, encompassing comprehensive management aspects. A major film production often costs tens of millions of yuan. Second, regarding time costs, this includes not only the time for filming and raw material collection but also editing, post-production, and approval processes before release, which can take anywhere from several months to several years. For short videos, both financial and time costs are substantially lower. Currently, short videos primarily function as life documentation or functional information dissemination, with minimal production costs and zero distribution costs. In terms of time costs, utilizing online platforms for release, the entire process

from production to publication to viewing takes anywhere from several hours to several days.

The reasons why short video production costs are much lower than long videos in both financial and temporal terms stem from several factors. On one hand, this results from low network usage costs, which include not only near-zero costs for software platform publishing but also affordable production tools such as Aijianji, VUE, Jianying, and other emerging applications that are inexpensive and easily accessible via smartphones. On the other hand, short videos require far less content presentation than long videos, and their quality is also significantly lower. Additionally, in the new media context, numerous short video creation platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou have emerged, providing not only video production tools but also rich video presentation formats. During the short video creation process, creators can not only complete video production through these platforms but also learn from creative experiences shared on them, providing favorable conditions for improving short video quality.

1.2 Content Creation

Video content comprises multiple dimensions. First, regarding content depth, long videos possess insurmountable advantages over short videos. Long videos typically require thought-provoking content to attract audiences, and due to their duration advantage, this thought-provocation is coherent and profound. Although short video content is also moving in this direction, the disparity in presentation duration prevents it from matching the depth of long videos. Representative long video formats such as films, TV dramas, and even variety shows all demonstrate this characteristic. However, short video content creation possesses attributes of being concise and highly entertaining, often presenting easily understandable material that can be consumed during fragmented time periods due to its brief duration. Consequently, short video content creation caters to mass viewing demands and better suits modern lifestyles.

Second, regarding content orientation, long videos emphasize abstract content derived from yet transcending daily life, such as emotion, philosophy, and contemplation. Short videos, conversely, focus on concrete, life-oriented elements like information, news, and practical value. Although the boundary between the two is not particularly distinct, content presented through major media and formats does exhibit these characteristics.

Third, from the perspective of content breadth, short videos draw from more diverse sources and offer richer, more varied content, with UGC (User-Generated Content) becoming increasingly prominent as market scale expands. Due to their brief duration characteristic, short videos can present far more content per unit time than long videos. On many short video platforms, one can find abundant content including life sharing, commercial promotion, product marketing, and highlights from films and music. This diversity reflects the extensive nature of short video creation, functioning like a treasure chest of life that sat-

ifies the viewing needs of different demographic groups.

Fourth, regarding value manifestation, short videos and long videos differ in orientation, making it impossible to simply declare one superior to the other. The informational and news value of short videos, along with their life-oriented and concrete forms, give them greater advertising utility, and their economic and material value far exceeds that of long videos. Long videos, through emotion, philosophy, contemplation, and even entertainment programs, deliver more spiritual value. From the perspective of audience value, short videos reach more viewers, especially with the emergence of various video platforms that have shifted leisure-time focus toward short videos, resulting in higher viewership and greater viewing benefits. Compared to long videos, short videos offer better advertising effectiveness and faster information dissemination. Moreover, as life rhythms continue accelerating, the value advantages of short videos will become increasingly apparent, establishing them as important promotional channels for advertising, enterprises, and news in the future.

2. Consumption Comparison Between Short Videos and Long Videos

The consumption comparison between short videos and long videos analyzes advantages and disadvantages from the audience perspective, encompassing the convenience of reception carriers for both formats—which is closely related to technological development—as well as the breadth of audience reach and scenario convenience, areas where the two formats exhibit distinct differences.

2.1 Video Carriers

Contemporary society features diverse video dissemination forms. Beyond traditional television, cinemas, and computers, smartphones have become the largest video carrier, supplemented by ubiquitous mobile media such as skyscraper screens, stations, subways, and trains presenting videos for various purposes. The development of video carriers essentially traces the evolution of video itself. Before societal network connectivity, media primarily consisted of television and film; as society became connected via the internet, the landscape gradually transitioned to television, film, and computers; with the comprehensive popularization of smartphones, video carriers have developed into a multifaceted presentation form dominated by mobile devices while retaining other formats, with various media audiences and functions gradually stabilizing during this evolutionary process.

In terms of carrier convenience for video dissemination, short videos surpass long videos for two main reasons. First, mobile client convenience: mobile app software enables extremely convenient uploading and browsing after video production. Second, smartphones are compact and portable, allowing full utilization of fragmented time—capabilities that fixed video carriers like television and film cannot match. Furthermore, regarding carrier capacity for video dis-

semination, short videos also outperform long videos, again due to smartphones' unmatched convenience and popularity. In terms of convenience, smartphones can fully utilize fragmented time, and short video duration appears better suited to such usage, enabling 随时随地 viewing that traditional television and film carriers cannot achieve, while long videos are ill-suited for occupying fragmented time. In terms of popularity, smartphone ownership with online video playback capabilities has reached nearly one or even two per person, whereas televisions reach only one or several per household at most. Based on these factors, short video carrier convenience is superior to that of long videos.

2.2 Audience Demographics and Consumption Scenarios

Analyzing the demographics targeted by various video carriers and their video consumption scenarios reveals distinct patterns.

Short video audiences primarily consist of office workers and young people who consume video content mostly during fragmented time periods. First, office workers have abundant fragmented time, and short videos on mobile phones perfectly accommodate this schedule. After a busy workday, they seek relaxation during leisure time, and short videos' brevity, simplicity, and immediacy better suit busy, stressed individuals compared to TV dramas and films. Consequently, office workers constitute the largest consumer group for short videos. Second, young people are more trendy, passionate, and excitable than middle-aged and elderly individuals, finding short videos' brevity, stimulation, speed, and directness highly attractive—contributing to the phenomenon of young people constantly using their phones.

Long video audiences primarily comprise leisure-oriented individuals who consume video content mostly in fixed locations such as homes and cinemas. This demographic includes elderly people, housewives, children, and middle-aged individuals with relatively relaxed work environments. This distribution results from both carrier characteristics and content features. Regarding carriers, television serves as the primary entertainment facility for housewives, children, and elderly people; cinemas mainly attract young and middle-aged audiences; and some middle-aged individuals with relaxed work environments frequently watch TV dramas and variety shows. Regarding content, long videos' time-consuming nature and profound characteristics suit home-based lifestyles and entertainment for people with abundant leisure time.

Of course, the division between short video and long video carriers is not absolute. Short video advertisements also appear frequently in television media, while long videos are also heavily loaded onto mobile video platforms. Moreover, with the advent of the 5G era, solutions to network speed issues and further reductions in network consumption prices will enable long videos to gain more consumer groups on mobile apps.

3. Comparative Analysis of Persuasive Power Between Short Videos and Long Videos

Strictly speaking, video persuasive power refers to characteristics presented in video content. This factor is analyzed separately because persuasive power represents video' s most significant feature and ultimate pursuit. Both long and short videos share this commonality, differing only in their expressive capabilities, which must be measured through two dimensions: empathy and “arousal state.”

3.1 Empathy

Psychologists define empathy as first recognizing others' emotions and states, then replicating those emotions and states within oneself—in other words, feeling what others feel. This is extremely important for video. In terms of convenience of empathy expression, long videos surpass short videos for two main reasons. First, content completeness: long videos hold significant advantages over short videos because they typically construct a complete “world,” whether in terms of narrative, entertainment value, or scene design—elements that short videos cannot match. Enabling audience empathy relies on presenting storylines, constructed environments, and other artistic techniques. In this regard, short videos' brief duration makes it inconvenient to present complete stories or environments. Second, content authenticity: long videos also hold substantial advantages over short videos. The environments constructed in long videos represent artistic reproductions of real settings, with storylines derived from yet transcending daily life, primarily through artistic techniques such as exaggerating facts, concentrating conflicts, and dramatic visuals to generate empathy. The emphasis is on enabling audiences to continuously contemplate and develop empathy as the long video progresses. Although short videos also employ techniques like exaggeration, conflict concentration, and dramatic visuals to express authenticity and evoke emotions, they cannot compare with long videos in terms of narrative depth or profundity. However, as short video creation technology continues upgrading and thought-provoking copywriting is increasingly incorporated, short video quality is constantly improving, enabling some excellent short videos to achieve relatively good empathy effects.

3.2 Arousal State

“Arousal state” refers to the degree to which viewers' mental states are influenced by videos while watching, categorized into “high arousal state” and “low arousal state.” Arousal state depends not only on the video' s inherent appeal but also on its format.

Regarding video appeal, long videos are more adept than short videos. Long videos captivate audiences through professional quality and complete, profound content. In *I Am a Singer*, for instance, audiences not only appreciate beautiful songs but also serve as judges evaluating singers' vocal abilities. Although short

videos are becoming increasingly attractive, continuously improving production quality and strengthening thematic and topical elements, with some touching stories and thought-provoking ideas, they still cannot compare with long videos. This explains why people have high expectations when going to cinemas to watch movies but never anticipate the advertisements (short videos) before the film begins.

Regarding video format, short videos' "low arousal state" is easily understood: due to their brief duration—mostly under one minute—even highly attractive content immediately returns viewers to self-arousal after the video ends.

Conclusion

Short videos and long videos each possess distinct advantages and disadvantages in the current era. From a production perspective, short videos require significantly less financial and time investment than long videos. Regarding content presentation, long videos offer greater completeness and depth, with higher spiritual value, while short videos trend toward information and news, yielding higher economic value. From a consumption perspective, short video carriers are more extensive than long videos, dominated by mobile phones, with primary consumers being office workers and young people. Long video markets are similarly broad but smaller in scale, dominated by television and cinemas, with primary consumers being housewives, elderly people, and children. Regarding persuasive power, long videos demonstrate superior empathy and "high arousal state" characteristics compared to short videos.

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Author Biography: Zheng Tingting (1981-), female, from Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, is an intermediate-level editor. Research direction: news gathering and editing.

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

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