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The ‘Boom’ and ‘Perils’ Facing Short Videos in the Power Industry: Also on the Development Path for Content Creation (Postprint)

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Abstract

In 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, China’s major central power enterprises took the lead in participating in the construction and power supply assurance of Leishenshan and Huoshenshan hospitals, and leveraged short-video live-streaming e-commerce on platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou to support poverty alleviation efforts, thereby fulfilling their social responsibilities and shouldering the commitments of state-owned enterprises; related short-video reports also received widespread acclaim and gained promotional coverage from the government and industry media including China Electric Power News, remedying the long-standing predicament of an absent image for the power industry. The author proposes improvement directions for content creation to address three existing issues in the power industry’s short videos: fragmented content, lack of educational function, and low emergency management capabilities; future efforts should focus on constructing the image of the power industry, strengthening the educational functions of platforms, and honing emergency management capabilities in breaking news reporting, thereby enabling the news and publicity work of the power industry to achieve steady and long-term development in the era of short videos.

Full Text

Abstract

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, prompting China’s major central state-owned power enterprises to take immediate action in constructing and powering the Leishenshan and Huoshenshan hospitals. These enterprises also leveraged short video live-streaming on platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou to support poverty alleviation through e-commerce, fulfilling their social responsibilities and demonstrating state-owned enterprise accountability. Related short

video reports garnered widespread praise and received coverage from government and industry media outlets such as *China Electric Power News*, transforming the industry's traditionally weak public image. This paper identifies three key challenges facing power industry short videos: fragmented content, deficient educational functions, and low emergency management capacity. The author proposes improvements focusing on constructing a cohesive industry image, strengthening platform educational functions, and developing emergency management capabilities through crisis reporting. Only through these measures can power industry news and publicity work achieve steady, long-term development in the short video era.

Keywords: short video; electric power; media image shaping; ideological and political education function; public opinion response

Introduction

2020 marked the pinnacle of short video popularity in China. By December 2020, the country's short video user base had reached 873 million, accounting for 88.3% of all internet users [1], with demand continuing to grow exponentially. This surge has propelled platforms like Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou to the forefront of digital media. The electric power industry has responded by establishing a robust presence on these platforms, with notable accounts such as "Grid Headlines" and "Southern Grid 50Hz" emerging as industry leaders. Research indicates that all major central state-owned power enterprises have now established Douyin accounts as crucial external publicity channels. Collectively, these accounts have amassed 2.2543 million followers, with "Grid Headlines"—operated by State Grid Corporation of China—leading the pack with over 2 million followers, leveraging content aggregation strategies through curated collections.

[TABLE: Follower Statistics for Major Central Power Enterprise Douyin Accounts]

Overview of Major Central Power Enterprise Douyin Accounts - Southern Grid 50Hz: 50,000 followers - National Energy Group: 37,000 followers
Statistics as of February 28, 2021

Content analysis reveals two primary categories of power industry short videos: (1) industry-specific topics such as grid construction, business environment optimization, peak summer/winter operations, maintenance and repair, and digital grid initiatives; and (2) general topics including poverty alleviation, party-building activities, and volunteer services. While these videos have become vital tools for public engagement and industry communication, featuring diverse content and innovative formats well-suited to short video platforms, the industry still lacks a unified platform capable of guiding overall content strategy. This fragmentation has resulted in a weak collective industry image and a tendency

toward “reporting only good news” while demonstrating inadequate crisis response capabilities.

Current Challenges in Power Industry Short Videos

At present, most power industry short videos remain confined to corporate information dissemination. Platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, Bilibili, and Weibo are dominated by entertainment-oriented content with strong social networking features. In contrast, other essential sectors have successfully established compelling screen presences: the “China Military Network” Douyin account, operated by the People’s Liberation Army’s news center, boasts 20.7 million followers and 470 million likes, with its “Recruit Xiao Liu” series garnering 170 million views across 31 episodes. Similarly, accounts representing police, education, medical, and aerospace sectors have achieved significant traction.

The power industry, despite its fundamental importance to national welfare and people’s livelihoods, remains conspicuously absent from mainstream media narratives. The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 provided a breakthrough moment, as major power enterprises mobilized to support construction and power supply for Leishenshan and Huoshenshan hospitals. Frontline workers in these short videos received widespread acclaim, and live-streaming e-commerce initiatives for poverty alleviation demonstrated corporate social responsibility, earning coverage from state media and the *China Electric Power News*. However, as enterprises diversify and media convergence deepens, differentiation becomes increasingly challenging. Simple holiday greetings and corporate promotions no longer suffice. Future development requires industry media to orchestrate major media events and collaborate with high-quality user-generated content (UGC) platforms to collectively construct a cohesive industry image that serves the public.

Currently dominated by corporate content, power industry short video creation still faces significant uncertainties. How grid companies, power generation firms, and construction enterprises can differentiate their services and actively attract and convert users represents a new research frontier requiring industry-wide exploration.

Current Characteristics of Power Industry Short Video Content

Focus on Frontline Workers and Grassroots Profiles

Power enterprises serve as the primary creators of short video content, producing materials covering corporate news, industry developments, employee life, and power-related arts and culture. Industry media similarly concentrates on showcasing work dynamics and employee profiles to enrich workers’ cultural life. In recent years, enterprises have attempted to “break through” by soliciting user-generated content for holiday-themed videos aligned with platform char-

acteristics. However, this exclusive focus on frontline workers has resulted in a dearth of service-oriented information that residents actually need, such as power outage notifications, electrical safety tips, and popular science content. Entertainment-heavy content has failed to fully leverage the platforms' potential to serve the public.

Diverse Content Aligned with Platform Dynamics

Beyond positive coverage of corporate news, project progress, employee life, and technological innovation, some enterprises have pioneered educational content. For instance, the “State Grid Hangzhou Power Supply Company” Douyin account specializes in power science popularization through animated videos, producing three series: “Tianmu Power Mini-Lectures,” “Instant Power Knowledge,” and “Power Stories in Cartoons.” The first series alone has 23 episodes with 1.689 million total views, contributing to the account's 11,000 followers and 1.891 million likes by February 2021. This demonstrates growing industry exploration of educational functions, enabling users to learn during fragmented time slots.

Nevertheless, this decentralized, diverse content creation has led to fragmentation, preventing the industry from consolidating efforts or executing major unified themes effectively.

Positive Orientation in Corporate Communication

In today's omnimedia environment, WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin have become essential battlegrounds for corporate external publicity. Short videos enable synchronous audio-visual communication that creates psychological “presence” for audiences. However, current content overwhelmingly emphasizes positive information while rarely addressing negative news or crises, inadvertently increasing response times and damaging corporate interests and social image. The February 2021 Texas power outage crisis exemplifies this gap: while mainstream media showcased the blackout's impact through short videos, power authorities' crisis management remained conspicuously absent from public view.

Problems Facing Power Industry Short Videos

Weak Overall Industry Image

The rise of new media has transformed information dissemination, offering novel approaches to shaping power industry worker profiles. While industry platforms could leverage omnimedia to provide public services and life information, significant challenges persist [3]. Despite the power industry's vital role in national welfare, its short video content remains detached from people's daily lives, offering limited readable material and gradually fading from public view. The sector's fragmented business characteristics and decentralized operations contribute to this weak collective image.

Improvements are emerging. During the 2020 pandemic, media outlets highlighted power workers' contributions: the China Electric Media Group live-streamed with Hubei maintenance staff at the Three Gorges Dam for the video "Thank You! Light Bearers at the Three Gorges Dam," while *People's Daily's* WeChat platform published a 193-second video on Huoshenshan Hospital's construction, explicitly acknowledging power workers' 24-hour efforts. In poverty alleviation campaigns, major power enterprises used short video live-streaming to boost agricultural sales from impoverished regions. Additionally, the *China Electric Power News* WeChat public account collected over a dozen employee-produced music videos in 2020, including a repurposed song "You Look Good Even in a Mask" adapted by State Grid Sichuan Suining Power Supply Company workers, distributed across multiple platforms in various lengths [4]. These efforts demonstrate short videos' potential to shape a cohesive industry image, highlighting workers' dedication to safeguarding lives and serving national development.

Deficient Platform Educational Functions

Power industry short videos predominantly feature entertainment and light topics, rarely addressing ideological-political education or corporate safety education. This represents a significant oversight, as short videos constitute a crucial new media platform where neglecting educational functions risks losing ideological ground.

The deficiency manifests in two ways. First, ideological-political education remains superficial, limited to party-building videos without deeper exploration of industry-specific content. Second, science popularization functions are underdeveloped. The 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China presents an opportunity for the power industry—fundamental to national welfare—to leverage short videos for party history education, strengthen party organization, foster dedication to the industry, and fulfill the mission of "people-centered electric power."

Low Emergency Management Capability

Natural disasters and human errors threaten power system stability, triggering emergencies. During such crises, new media platforms become primary public opinion battlegrounds. Failure to provide timely, transparent information can breed speculation, rumors, and viral misinformation, undermining social stability [5]. Currently, power industry short videos overwhelmingly "report good news while concealing problems," selectively sharing positive information. Some enterprises even cover up, delay, or falsify reports to protect economic interests and corporate image, potentially causing severe consequences including economic losses and casualties.

Critical questions remain: How can damage information be accurately relayed to authorities within minimal time? How can authentic, compelling video footage

reach audiences? These issues demand urgent resolution. Weak disaster early warning capabilities for earthquakes, floods, typhoons, and landslides, coupled with inadequate safety awareness among some employees and insufficient corporate safety culture, create latent risks compounded by absent emergency management functions.

Development Paths for Power Industry Short Video Content

Building Industry Image Through Major Events

Seizing opportunities presented by major events—the 70th anniversary of the PRC, the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up, or the COVID-19 pandemic—requires strategic planning and innovative short video presentation to construct industry image. The China Electric Media Group, as the sector’s leading media organization, is accelerating deep media convergence by deploying on Douyin and video platforms and integrating industry information through its “Electric Power Kitchen” converged media platform. As more enterprises connect to this platform, collaborative content creation will facilitate “breaking through” and enable image construction during major events.

First, joint planning for major events is essential. For instance, the first anniversary of Wuhan’s lockdown saw collaborative content between China Electric Media and State Grid Hubei Electric Power, creating powerful narratives of workers safeguarding power supply for life-saving facilities. Second, key commemorative moments require focused planning. The CPC’s centenary in 2021 offered opportunities to innovate promotional activities, recount the industry’s century-long development, and revisit China’s electric power industrial trajectory.

Strengthening Platform Educational Functions in Daily Promotion

News and public opinion should follow the people. Power enterprise short video platforms must collaborate with media platforms to capture this new communication frontier and fully leverage educational functions.

Ideological-political education content should be enhanced. Beyond routine corporate updates, innovative short videos should combine industry substance with accessible expression. Party history learning, party classes, and meetings can be integrated with central propaganda themes to create grand narratives specific to the power industry, producing works with popularity, warmth, and impact. These platforms should consolidate positive energy, help the public understand workers’ lives, convey genuine emotions, tell compelling worker stories, and fulfill social responsibilities. The CPC centenary provides a timely opportunity to showcase the industry’s vibrant spirit and achievements, unifying thought and invigorating national spirit [6].

Simultaneously, power safety culture education must be expanded. Given electricity's direct relevance to daily life, short video platforms should prioritize safety promotion and education.

Enhancing Emergency Management Capabilities in Crisis Reporting

Due to accidents' unpredictability, on-site short videos serve as crucial evidence for enterprises understanding real situations and for industry media investigations. Strengthening professional-generated content (PGC) from frontline correspondents, integrating user-generated content (UGC) from citizens and employees, and leveraging emergency command center information can fundamentally improve information reporting and emergency response capabilities.

Furthermore, comprehensive public opinion risk management mechanisms must be established, encompassing prevention, monitoring, reporting, and response systems. Pre-crisis early warning and rapid, positive guidance during incidents can effectively mitigate risks [7]. Overall emergency capabilities and media command responsiveness must be enhanced to protect economic benefits while achieving social impact. Professional media must carefully verify information, eliminate falsehoods, and prevent fake news during crisis management, emphasizing industry communication and emergency response strengthening.

Conclusion

Power industry short videos, primarily enterprise-driven, have achieved initial success but remain plagued by excessive entertainment, weak UGC collaboration, and poor emergency management. Beyond corporate promotion, the sector urgently requires a supply-side content reform to optimize functions: seize opportunities to build industry image during major events, solidify educational functions in daily promotion, and coordinate multi-party efforts to enhance emergency management capabilities.

Both enterprises and industry media must draw inspiration from the field while strategizing from headquarters, root themselves in the masses during routine reporting while mobilizing the public during emergencies. Only by cultivating short video platforms with strong dissemination, credibility, and influence can the industry meet new-era publicity needs, enhance public opinion management, shape contemporary industry image, and ensure steady, long-term development in the short video era.

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

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