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Development Characteristics and Current Status of Mainstream Media Short-Form Video News Production: A Case Study of Content Production and Dissemination on the “Douyin” Platform (Postprint)

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Abstract

Short videos have rapidly developed and matured in recent years, fundamentally altering existing media communication patterns and forms. Many official mainstream media institutions, recognizing the trend, have enriched their communication channels by opening Douyin short video accounts and engaging in new media operations, thereby enhancing their control and guidance over public opinion. This paper primarily takes mainstream media news production within the Douyin short video app as its entry point, and through analysis of the basic characteristics, advantages, and shortcomings of current short video news and Douyin short video content production, further explores news production and dissemination across the short video industry as a whole, and proposes rational suggestions and feasible references.

Full Text

Preamble

Development Characteristics and Current Status Analysis of Mainstream Media Short Video News Production: A Case Study of Content Production and Dissemination of News Short Videos on the “Douyin” Platform

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Abstract: Short videos have developed and matured rapidly in recent years, fundamentally altering existing media communication patterns and forms. Many official mainstream media institutions have strategically responded by

opening Douyin short video accounts and engaging in new media operations to diversify communication channels and enhance their capacity to guide and shape public opinion. This paper examines mainstream media news production within the Douyin short video application, analyzing the fundamental characteristics, advantages, and shortcomings of current short video news and Douyin content production. Through this analysis, the study explores broader patterns of news production and dissemination across the short video industry and proposes reasonable recommendations and feasible reference points for future development.

Keywords: short video news; mainstream media; Douyin; content production; internet; information communication technology

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1. Research Background

Contemporary society is characterized by continuous development in mobile internet and information communication technologies, fostering a media environment marked by diversified communication channels, varied transmission formats, and complex audience groups. Information dissemination has gradually matured from reliance on traditional print media toward diversified internet-based transmission models. In this transformation, video-based information has gained increasing attention and popularity, particularly short videos. Leveraging their social and mobile attributes, short videos have emerged as a new media form capable of delivering key information efficiently with clarity, vividness, and flexibility, while accommodating fragmented information consumption patterns. These qualities have facilitated their widespread adoption among audiences. Against this broader media landscape, the dissemination of government and official news events and the promotion of mainstream values now require supplementation through short video platforms beyond traditional media channels, thereby enhancing the influence of official mainstream media and achieving more effective communication outcomes.

2.3 Short Video News

Short video news represents a novel form of journalistic presentation that delivers news content through short video formats. Distributed and disseminated

on short video platforms, it is characterized by brief duration, strong interactivity, diverse information channels, rich content, and primary guidance and supervision by official and professional media organizations. Given the current media environment and the developmental trajectory of short videos, short video news holds necessary and positive significance. It not only effectively adapts to evolving developmental trends but also promotes media convergence while supplementing the dissemination limitations of traditional media in today's online media landscape. In recent years, governments at all levels have actively established new media accounts for government affairs, shifting their communication platforms from fixed, singular reliance on television to a new model combining traditional and new media—often referred to as the “two micros and one Douyin” (Weibo, WeChat, and Douyin) approach. The continuous growth in short video user numbers has made it an inevitable trend for mainstream media and official government entities to adapt and actively participate. By integrating new media communication channels and utilizing short video platforms for mainstream value dissemination and news event reporting, this approach is no longer limited to a few official media institutions.

2.1 Short Video

Short video, also known as short-form video, is a method of internet content dissemination typically lasting from several seconds to several minutes. It primarily relies on mobile clients and PCs for shooting, editing, dissemination, and interactive sharing. Compared with traditional video productions, short videos feature brief content, convenient dissemination, diverse formats, relatively low production costs, and viewing unrestricted by time or space. According to the 45th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development” released by the China Internet Network Information Center in March 2020, China’s short video user base reached 773 million, accounting for 85.6% of total internet users, making short videos the second-largest online application after instant messaging.

2.2 Douyin Short Video Platform

Douyin (short video app) stands as the most representative and typical short video social software platform. As of August 2020, Douyin’s daily active users had exceeded 600 million, demonstrating its considerable influence. Since March 2017, official mainstream media have successively established their presence on Douyin, producing and publishing news content to transmit mainstream values. As of December 7, 2020, *People’s Daily* had accumulated 5.52 billion likes and 120 million followers, while *CCTV News* had accumulated 3.87 billion likes and 110 million followers. Similar official media Douyin accounts generally maintain high levels of attention and activity. This indicates that official mainstream media platforms have become long-term active participants on Douyin, with large audience bases, extensive reach, and significant influence.

3. Content Production of Mainstream Media on Douyin Platform

3.1 Content Production

In terms of content production, mainstream Douyin media primarily focus on topics such as breaking news, featured individuals, current affairs and government affairs, and touching stories. These topics align well with the lifestyle-oriented, fragmented, and entertainment-driven characteristics of short video platforms. Regarding personality reporting, official media accounts emphasize shaping and highlighting human images, appealing to broad audiences while consistently promoting positive energy and patriotism. Hot news and current affairs reporting represent inherent advantages for mainstream media. During production, mainstream media Douyin accounts fully leverage first-hand political resources and content from party and government media while adapting to the audio-visual habits of online users. By editing content in ways that resonate with audiences—particularly younger demographics—they achieve greater news attention and stimulate interest in political news. In reporting touching stories, mainstream media Douyin accounts evoke emotional resonance by documenting ordinary acts of kindness in daily life or highlighting dedication and perseverance during major events. For instance, during the pandemic, Douyin accounts such as *Xinwen Lianbo* and *People's Daily* reported numerous heartwarming stories that received massive likes and shares, creating trending topics. These efforts effectively leveraged social media's connective and communicative functions, focusing on emotional engagement while transmitting positive social values through content dissemination.

3.2 Narrative Characteristics

During information dissemination on Douyin, official media fully consider the current mobile and social media environment and the fundamental laws of short video communication. Their narrative characteristics include “fragmented presentation,” emphasis on emotional arousal and scene adaptation, and the use of interesting and trendy language [1].

4.3 Low Barrier to Entry for Short Video News Production

As internet technologies have matured, video editing software has become increasingly simple and convenient to operate, allowing for easier onboarding. Official institutions or media outlets can rapidly establish Douyin accounts and immediately begin content production without requiring extensive professional training in the initial technical stages. Groups with basic internet literacy can relatively easily master the technical operations.

4.4 Strong Audience Stickiness

Compared with traditional media, short videos feature interactive functions that create stronger audience stickiness.

4.5 Audience-Centric Dissemination Methods

Compared with text-based or text-image combination approaches in other media, video transmission presents content through audio-visual means, generating stronger audience appeal during dissemination. Moreover, audiences in the mobile internet era generally prefer personalized content consumption and fragmented information. The algorithmic recommendation mechanism of short videos and their inherently brief duration precisely accommodate this information consumption preference.

4.1 Strong Timeliness in Dissemination

The immediate transmission of news content represents an essential characteristic of journalism and a key indicator of news media and practitioners' professional competence. The operational convenience and simplified publishing process of Douyin enable immediate collection and posting, significantly enhancing information dissemination efficiency.

4.2 Rich and Diversified Dissemination Content

The term "news" traditionally carries a sense of solemnity and seriousness, with its production and dissemination relying on the most mainstream and original traditional media platforms, leading to stereotypical and monolithic content impressions. The arrival of the media convergence era has enabled short video news development. Douyin's algorithmic recommendation mechanism can conduct more precise audience data analysis, delivering news content to corresponding audiences based on users' individual characteristics, knowledge levels, age groups, and other relevant factors. This satisfies audience news needs and further realizes the value of news dissemination. Simultaneously, the resulting data can inform news production, providing creators with insights into audience preferences and tendencies for more targeted content production and distribution.

5. Shortcomings in Mainstream Media Short Video Operations

While the advantages of official media on Douyin are evident, certain shortcomings remain in the current development stage. Greater efforts are needed to form a more mature and complete operational model.

5.1 Limited Expression Techniques and Need for Quality Improvement

Although existing official media Douyin accounts are basically well-established and produce numerous news short videos daily, not all content is of high quality. Due to time constraints, some major news events are often not explained clearly, with event summaries and discussions remaining superficial, thereby reducing the news depth and value of the content. Additionally, short video news often exhibits narrative approaches similar to traditional journalism. This mechanical continuation of conventional narrative styles fails to adequately incorporate the characteristics of new media communication within the current media context or fully consider audience reading and browsing habits, diminishing audience interest to some extent. Douyin's viewing mechanism involves "swiping down"—if a news video fails to capture audience attention immediately, its chances of being viewed are substantially reduced. Furthermore, the professional competence or cultural level of short video news publishers affects content production, resulting in uneven quality of news works on Douyin.

5.2 Homogenized Content Forms and Lack of Brand Distinctiveness

Although algorithmic mechanisms enable mainstream media to reference audience needs, some official media accounts employ similar production forms and methods, disseminating comparable news content that fails to effectively "capture eyeballs." Moreover, not all official accounts produce high-quality content; some mainstream media maintain relatively low output quality. The phenomenon of content homogenization is also widespread, making audiences prone to aesthetic fatigue. Sometimes the boundaries between content from different mainstream media Douyin accounts become blurred, preventing the formation of uniquely distinctive short video news brands [1].

5.3 Insufficient Exploitation of Social Functions and Lack of Two-Way Interaction

Short video platforms inherently possess strong social attributes in their communication models, providing audiences with space for shared discussion. Real-time interactive communication can not only facilitate news content dissemination but also enhance public news experiences, timely understand audience perspectives and feedback on events, and satisfy users' psychological needs for interaction and participation in news. Under this real-time interactive communication model, a dynamic of media guidance and audience participation emerges. However, although mainstream media successfully deliver information to viewers, this transmission often remains fixed and one-directional—more didactic or presentational—resulting in low audience engagement after viewing and unmet expectations for multi-faceted satisfaction. This occurs because most short video platforms currently only allow simple commenting, and normalized interaction patterns between disseminators and audiences have not been established. Additionally, certain barriers between short video platforms reduce the vitality

of information exchange, hindering collaborative development across different video platforms.

6. Development Strategies and Improvement Methods for Short Video News Production

Building upon the identified advantages and shortcomings of short video news production, this section proposes reasonable recommendations for future development.

6.1 Uphold the “Content is King” Philosophy to Produce Higher-Quality Short Video News

Whether in traditional or digital media eras, content quality remains the decisive factor for effective dissemination, audience attraction, and influence enhancement. Short video news production should consistently adhere to this principle, prioritizing video content creation. While maintaining the short duration, fragmented nature, and innovative presentation formats of short videos, producers should emphasize the substance and connotation of news works, striving to make news short videos more comprehensive and substantial while leaving room for depth and reflection.

6.2 Continuously Improve Talent Teams for Official Douyin and Other Short Video Platforms

Although short video news operations are relatively straightforward, media literacy remains crucial in news production. Whether content production team members possess news media literacy similarly affects platform development and news content dissemination. Therefore, talent team development remains necessary. Team members must continue learning and upholding journalistic professionalism while absorbing young, creative talent into production teams to develop more innovative news presentation formats and emotionally compelling narrative approaches. This can reduce content homogenization and enable more diversified and enriched expression forms.

6.3 Fully Utilize Short Video Platforms’ Social Attributes to Adapt to Participatory Culture in Social Media

Short video platforms are fundamentally positioned as social media, and audiences expect to simultaneously satisfy multiple needs—including information reception, sharing, and feedback—during media use. Official mainstream media should leverage this attribute to engage in more active interaction and communication with audiences, answering questions and resolving doubts to strengthen communication effects and sustain public opinion guidance [4].

6.4 Emphasize Platform Linkage and Coordinated Development to Perfect Differentiated Dissemination

Different mainstream media can appropriately share information to create differentiated communication focuses and attention priorities, thereby establishing their own distinctive communication characteristics.

6.5 Remain Committed to Their Mission and Continue Guiding Mainstream Social Values

Mainstream official media should always remember their responsibilities and missions, consistently fulfilling their vital function as the “eyes, ears, and voice” of society and guiding mainstream values and social recognition even within short video platforms.

Leveraging short video communication to guide mainstream values and showcase government affairs aligns with current information communication development trends. News production using short videos as a carrier has enhanced the influence of traditional mainstream media while providing audiences with more convenient channels to access news and understand current affairs. This represents a positive response by mainstream media to changes in the media landscape and the reconstruction of public opinion ecology. Mainstream media must continue to develop and improve short video news production to better serve audiences and guide public opinion.

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

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