

On the Construction of Short Video Communication Matrix for Mainstream Media in the Converged Media Era: Postprint

Authors: Hou Jinjin

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Abstract

The emergence of 5G has spurred the proliferation of short-video social platforms and the massive emergence of new media, while also catalyzing mainstream media to accelerate their deployment on short-video platforms for news dissemination. Mainstream media's utilization of short-video platforms to construct a communication matrix in the converged media era addresses the need to adapt to the continuously evolving carriers and mediums of news communication. By optimizing and integrating their own communication channels, mainstream media can enhance their competitiveness, better merge their inherent advantages with new media technologies, and simultaneously further consolidate their user base and user stickiness. Furthermore, mainstream media will accelerate the in-depth development of their short-video matrix through the establishment of proprietary short-video platforms.

Full Text

On the Construction of Mainstream Media's Short Video Communication Matrix in the Era of Integrated Media

Abstract: The emergence of 5G has invigorated short video social platforms and catalyzed the proliferation of new media, accelerating mainstream media's strategic deployment on short video platforms for news dissemination. In the integrated media era, mainstream media's construction of a communication matrix through short video platforms represents a necessary adaptation to continuously evolving news dissemination carriers and mediums. By optimizing and integrating their communication vehicles, mainstream media can enhance their competitiveness while better merging their inherent advantages with new media technologies, thereby further stabilizing their user base and increasing user stickiness. Additionally, mainstream media will accelerate the in-depth

development of their short video matrix by building proprietary short video platforms.

Keywords: 5G era; short video; communication matrix

On June 6, 2019, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology officially issued 5G commercial licenses to four domestic operators, marking China's formal entry into the 5G era. The advent of 5G represents not merely a transformation in communication technology but a fundamental shift across all aspects of society. Its most significant and direct impact is the dramatic acceleration of information transmission speed—files that required one to two hours to download on 4G networks can now be downloaded in mere seconds under 5G. This quantum leap in speed has naturally exerted profound influence on the news production environment and landscape.

The speed advantages of new media over traditional media can be clearly illustrated through comparative cases. Following the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, Xinhua News Agency released its first news report via CCTV 25 minutes after the event. During the Jiuzhaigou earthquake in 2017, nearly all mobile phone users nationwide received automatically pushed news reports within just 25 seconds of the earthquake. On July 4, 2019, at 10:17 AM, a 5.6-magnitude earthquake struck Gong County in Sichuan Province. The earthquake early warning system successfully issued alerts, providing Yibin City with a 5-second advance warning. The mainland earthquake warning network simultaneously sent alerts to government agencies, emergency departments, schools, television stations, mobile phones, and the general public. Within a mere decade, the development of new media has elevated information transmission speed to astonishing levels, demonstrating immense potential and capability.

According to the “World Internet Development Report 2019” released at a press conference for the sixth World Internet Conference on October 20, as of June 2019, China had 854 million internet users, representing a penetration rate of 61.2%, with 5.18 million websites. These statistics reveal that the emergence of the internet and 5G has fundamentally transformed both news dissemination carriers and user behavior. Audiences have gradually transitioned from reading print media during the traditional media era to consuming digital content, resulting in the gradual erosion of traditional media's fixed user base and continuous changes in information dissemination mediums.

The decline of traditional media is particularly evident in the print sector. The years 2018 and 2019 witnessed a peak in newspaper closures, most notably the cessation of *Beijing Morning Post* and *Legal Evening News* in 2019. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, newsstands reached their zenith with 2,500 locations in Beijing, yet by 2017, only slightly over 1,000 remained, with plans to eliminate all newsstands within three years. Similarly, Shanghai had over 3,000 newsstands at its peak in 1998, but only 200 remained by 2017. Websites and online media have become the primary vehicles for mainstream media transformation.

Since 2005, traditional media professionals have continuously migrated to new media platforms. For instance, Chen Chaohua, former general manager of *Southern Metropolis Daily*, became Vice President and Editor-in-Chief of Sohu; Zheng Wei, former deputy director of CCTV's Economic Channel, joined iQiyi as Chief Information Officer; Yi Xianfeng, former editor-in-chief of *China Business News*, resigned to join the native digital publication *The Paper*. His former colleagues, including deputy editors, section chiefs, and heads of automotive and finance departments, collectively resigned to establish the new media platform "Jiemian" in Shanghai.

The internet has enabled the direct emergence of numerous new media outlets, significantly accelerating information dissemination speeds compared to traditional media. This transformation has altered information carriers and transmission paths, reversed users' passive acceptance of information, strengthened immediacy in information dissemination, enabled real-time interaction between media and users, and empowered users to produce news independently through self-media. These new changes in news production have created enormous survival pressure for traditional mainstream media.

People's Daily began its transformation in 2015 by actively engaging with new media. The organization now operates 31 websites, 111 Weibo accounts, 110 WeChat public accounts, and 20 mobile client applications, reaching an audience exceeding 350 million readers.

Mainstream Media Actively Builds Short Video Communication Matrix

The year 2016 marked the dawn of the short video era. With the explosive growth of Douyin and the impending commercialization of 5G, user engagement with short videos has increased dramatically. By July 2019, Douyin announced that its daily active users had surpassed 320 million. Between April 2017 and April 2019, daily usage time for short video apps skyrocketed from less than 100 million hours to 600 million hours, with Douyin, Kuaishou, and Haokan Short Video claiming the top three positions. Watching short videos has become the most common and pervasive method for users to receive and disseminate information. Driven by this environment, mainstream media have begun focusing on short video platforms, actively establishing presences and building communication matrices to catalyze a "second transformation" of information dissemination mediums.

On July 30, 2019, the 4th National Party Newspaper Website Summit opened in Guangzhou, releasing the "2019 National Party Newspaper Integrated Communication Index Report." The report comprehensively evaluated content production and dissemination across 377 central, provincial, and municipal party newspapers in print, websites, Weibo, WeChat, proprietary clients, third-party platforms, and short video platforms. Data revealed that in 2019, party newspapers increased their coverage across all channels compared to the previous

year, with half operating Douyin accounts. Provincial-level party newspapers demonstrated the most comprehensive multi-channel presence, achieving 100% coverage across all channels except Douyin. Central-level party newspapers also showed strong performance, with full coverage across all channels except proprietary clients and Douyin.

Mainstream media' s deployment on short video platforms for news dissemination represents both an inevitable adaptation to the evolving media ecosystem and a strategic effort to capture user attention. The rapid rise of short videos has caused significant user attrition from traditional media, while audiences have grown accustomed to receiving information quickly and efficiently via the internet. Mainstream media' s short video strategy reflects an adaptation to evolving user reading habits.

On August 24, 2018, *Xinwen Lianbo* (*News Broadcast*) officially joined Douyin after previously launching on Kuaishou. Prior to this move, *Xinwen Lianbo* had amassed 12.109 million followers on Kuaishou within a short period. Its inaugural Douyin video similarly attracted massive attention and followers. This success demonstrates users' enthusiastic response to mainstream media' s down-to-earth approach to news dissemination through "Weibo, WeChat, and proprietary apps."

Xinwen Lianbo' s presence on Kuaishou and Douyin exemplifies mainstream media' s effective attempts to adapt to the times by building short video communication matrices. A communication matrix refers to an interconnected, sustainable content and dissemination system utilizing multiple channels. As short videos emerge as the primary information medium in the 5G era, mainstream media have integrated short video platforms with their existing communication channels to create comprehensive short video matrices.

The Role and Significance of Mainstream Media' s Short Video Communication Matrix

Enhancing Media Influence and Expanding Content Appeal Building a short video communication matrix enables mainstream media content to be broadcast across multiple short video social platforms, which are themselves interconnected with other new media such as WeChat, Weibo, Toutiao, and proprietary clients. This allows a single piece of content to be distributed simultaneously across various dissemination mediums, exponentially increasing viewership compared to single-channel distribution. The strong interactive nature of these platforms also triggers "secondary attention" from users, resulting in compound growth in both dissemination effectiveness and audience size, which substantially enhances user stickiness.

During the 2018 Spring Festival, *People' s Daily' s* Douyin video "Heartwarming Interaction Across the Internet: Hold Mom' s Hand" generated 344,000 discussions and 520 million views on Weibo within a single day. *Cankao Xiaoshi' s* video about Shaolin martial arts techniques going viral overseas, posted

on Huoguo Video, garnered nearly 9 million views on Tencent's platform and 1.4 million clicks on Baijiahao within a week. These examples demonstrate how short video matrices enable mainstream media content to flow across various platforms, leveraging strong interactivity to trigger user-driven “secondary attention” and achieve exponential growth in both dissemination impact and audience reach.

Reshaping User Perceptions and Winning Younger Audiences Traditional mainstream media news dissemination has historically been characterized by solemn, rigid presentation and limited user interaction, resulting in a one-way information delivery model that created psychological distance between audiences and media outlets. Following the construction of short video communication matrices, mainstream media no longer simply replicate traditional content but instead adopt formats favored by younger users. This approach not only adapts to the short video medium but also caters to user preferences, demonstrating a “user-centered” communication philosophy and presenting a revitalized, dynamic image.

On August 4, 2019, *People's Daily* collaborated with Douyin to release a series of short videos titled “If *People's Daily* Had a Douyin Account 70 Years Ago,” presenting 70 years of Chinese history through H5 interactive formats. Users marveled that news could be presented so innovatively. The traditionally serious and dignified *People's Daily* abandoned its “aloof” persona, adopting an approachable style on Douyin that showcased an endearing contrast. Currently, *People's Daily's* official Douyin account has surpassed 40 million followers and 1.4 billion likes, becoming the “ultimate idol.”

After *Xinwen Lianbo* joined Kuaishou in August 2019, anchor Li Zimeng explained the decision in remarkably down-to-earth internet language: “*Xinwen Lianbo* has been broadcasting for 41 years—probably older than many of our ‘old iron’ users. I know Kuaishou’s slogan is ‘Record the World, Record You,’ and *Xinwen Lianbo* records China every day, documenting Chinese people truly pursuing happiness and progress. In this sense, we are the same.” The Kuaishou account’s self-description as “41 years old” and “Capricorn” prompted users to comment: “So down-to-earth,” “Love this new *Xinwen Lianbo*.”

Users have also discovered a different side of anchor Kang Hui on CCTV’s Douyin account. In one video, Kang Hui soulfully sings “Someone Like Me” while making cute gestures, only to be interrupted by Li Sisi and Ren Luyu, revealing a “character collapse” moment that delighted users. Comments like “So this is what you’re really like,” “You work so hard, you should relax and be happy,” and “Actors trapped in anchor bodies” flooded the platform, with many users expressing their newfound fandom.

In 2019, *People's Daily Online's* Douyin account attracted users by showcasing its editorial team as “internet celebrities” and revealing behind-the-scenes workplace details to create a “soft and cute” image. One video featuring a

female editor creating Douyin content in her office by snapping her fingers to change scenic images, accompanied by popular Douyin music and the caption “Heard the new girl got assigned to film China’s great rivers and mountains for Tourism Day, so she started making Douyin in the office,” garnered 1.46 million likes. The humorous skit, combined with glimpses of the editorial office and staff, satisfied netizens’ curiosity. The “celebrity” editor subsequently showcased various corners of People’s Daily Online—the main entrance, cafeteria, convenience store, library—sparking extensive discussion and prompting many users to follow mainstream media short video accounts, appreciating their accessibility and relatability.

Future Prospects for Mainstream Media’s Short Video Communication Matrix

For mainstream media, the evolution of communication mediums represents an inevitable trend driven by technological and societal development. Actively deploying short videos and building short video communication matrices will become essential strategies in the upcoming 5G era. However, as short video social platforms remain in a mid-development phase, simply establishing accounts on these platforms is insufficient for building a robust communication matrix. Deeper refinement and improvement are necessary, as exemplified by *People’s Daily’s* pioneering efforts.

On September 19, 2019, *People’s Daily’s* New Media Center launched an independent short video product called “People’s Daily Video,” operating separately from the *People’s Daily* client app. This marked the first short video product launched by a “traditional print media” outlet in China, adding fuel to the already booming short video sector. During its pre-launch phase, promotional posters featured the slogan “Let you watch, help you act,” indicating that it serves not merely as a content platform but also bears “national team” service responsibilities. Beyond short videos and live streaming, “People’s Daily Video” functions as a mainstream short video PUGC (Professional User-Generated Content) aggregation platform, with content sourced from three channels: curated selections from various platforms, contributions from organizations and individuals, and original *People’s Daily* productions. The platform also features a “People’s Political Inquiry” function, extending the communication matrix’s attributes from pure dissemination to functional services and strengthening its overall capabilities.

The launch of *People’s Daily’s* dedicated short video platform signifies the deepening and vertical development of mainstream media’s short video matrix strategy, representing a bold and effective adaptation to internet society’s development trends and foreshadowing the future direction of mainstream media evolution.

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

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