

## Characteristics of Short-Form Video Communication in the New Media Era and Application Implications: Postprint

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### Abstract

In the contemporary era, the new media platform “Three Micros and One End” (WeChat, Weibo, micro-videos, and client applications) has become a new representative term for the new media age. Short (micro) videos constitute an Internet-based new media platform distinct from traditional media, featuring low barriers to production and dissemination, requiring no professional filming techniques, and whose content aligns with the modern public’s fragmented information absorption patterns—factors that account for their current explosive popularity. This paper discusses the development status and dissemination characteristics of short videos, using the Douyin app as a case study to analyze emerging trends, challenges encountered, and recommendations for future development in the new media era.

### Full Text

#### A Brief Discussion on the Characteristics and Application Implications of Short Video Communication in the New Media Era

**Abstract:** In today’s landscape, new media platforms known as the “Three Micros and One Client” (WeChat, Weibo, micro-videos, and news apps) have become emblematic of the new media era. Short (micro) videos represent an internet-based new media form that differs fundamentally from traditional media. With low barriers to production and dissemination, they require no professional filming techniques, and their content aligns with modern audiences’ fragmented information consumption patterns—explaining their current explosive popularity. This paper examines the development status and communication characteristics of short videos, using the Douyin app as a case study to analyze

emerging trends, challenges, and future development recommendations for short videos in the new media era.

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## Evolution of Information Consumption

Since 2013, internet users' information acquisition has shifted from text to images, and subsequently to video content (including micro-films and live streaming). This progression from traditional text-based communication to image-based dissemination (static graphics and GIFs) and now to video-based communication reflects fundamental changes in media consumption patterns.

### 2.1 Enhanced User Initiative and Participation

The advent of the new media era has brought continuous hardware and software upgrades, with smartphones becoming increasingly functional. Computers are no longer the sole devices for video editing; the emergence of various editing applications has made video production accessible without professional expertise. A single smartphone can now complete every step of short video creation (recording, editing, and viewing). This reduction in production requirements has transformed users from passive recipients to active creators who can share fresh life experiences and gain social validation through likes, fostering stronger initiative and participation.

### 2.2 Unconstrained by Time and Space

The new media era has witnessed rapid advancements in mobile phone and internet technologies, with continuous upgrades in mobile network transmission speeds and decreasing costs. The brief duration of short videos caters to users seeking quick information acquisition, providing an excellent experience. Consequently, short videos are no longer constrained by temporal or spatial limitations, enabling anytime, anywhere playback and dissemination.

### 2.3 Cross-Platform Dissemination

In 2016, domestic short videos experienced rapid innovation. The following year, various short video applications became essential entertainment tools. Currently, there are over 100 short video platforms, with short video usage accounting for 5.5% of total mobile internet usage time. In 2018, short videos developed at an astonishing pace, with comprehensive short video platforms reaching 403.5

million active users by February of that year. The fragmented nature of short video communication means users do not deliberately concentrate on a single platform for information; instead, they rely on widespread dissemination across social platforms. QQ, WeChat, and Weibo serve as primary distribution channels, each offering multiple client interfaces accessible via mobile phones, computers, or web browsers. To meet user demands for viewing content anywhere with devices and internet access, short videos have developed characteristics of cross-platform and cross-device sharing.

### 3.1 Topic Mining: The Power of Topic Leadership

Early short video apps entering the market (such as Meipai and Kuaishou) lacked fixed video themes, relying entirely on user autonomy without traceable origins. While this approach expanded creative freedom, it also left users with weaker innovation capabilities unable to fully express themselves. Addressing this challenge, Douyin pioneered an innovative model where topics are initiated by official accounts or certain users, inviting participation through user-generated short videos. Given the diversity of user perspectives, those interested in a particular topic can view multiple versions of the same theme, increasing the likelihood that one version will resonate deeply and create stronger user engagement. Initially launched as a music-based app, Douyin's uploaded video themes were predominantly music-related categories. However, its true foundation in the short video domain lies not merely in music videos but in its method of topic creation and guidance.

Douyin's homepage features numerous topic entry options, often generating participation from millions or even tens of millions of users. These topics are typically initiated not by ordinary users but by celebrities, influencers, or official Douyin accounts with significant influence. The topics are characterized by high simplicity for user comprehension and strong accessibility for participation. This topic leadership not only enhances user creativity but also improves engagement through participatory topics.

### 3.2 Production Mechanism: Imitation and Innovation Under Musical Backgrounds

As a music-based application, Douyin has capitalized on this feature by leveraging the popularity of shows like *The Rap of China* to attract a large hip-hop music fanbase. Rap artists joining Douyin release songs on the platform, which users can cover, adapt, and film accordingly. The platform also enables interaction with favorite rap artists, providing high-quality short video content. While music and video content maintain some connection—such as using music to express emotional content as background audio or directly using music as interaction soundtracks—it is evident that the primary focus is users' desired expression. Although music forms Douyin's foundation, the platform must now follow the “content is king” trend by separating music from content, making content the main attraction for users.

#### 4.1 Lack of Innovative Spirit and Entertainment-Oriented Content

The popularity of short videos has facilitated convenient information access, breaking traditional media limitations and enabling rapid dissemination through internet characteristics that transcend temporal and spatial constraints. However, numerous problems persist, including lack of innovative spirit, serious entertainment-oriented content, inability to ensure user stability, and insufficient regulatory oversight. Without standards, no industry can thrive. Raising standards and emphasizing content's 观赏性和故事性 (aesthetic value and narrative quality) is essential. Only by addressing these issues and standardizing practices can short videos in the new media era achieve greater development space and better prospects in the future.

The overall trend shows that catering excessively to popular taste has resulted in losing positive dissemination content, replaced by exaggerated, superficial material. This creates a "sensation-oriented" audience that focuses on feeling rather than substance in a shallow sensory stimulation environment. Moreover, highly forwarded short videos demonstrate low originality, dominated by imitation or direct plagiarism, with serious entertainment-oriented content characterizing the current short video landscape.

#### 4.2 Inability to Ensure User Stability

Although low production thresholds attract many users, they also result in superficial content lacking deeper meaning. For instance, numerous users repeatedly create lip-syncing videos or meaningless street snapshots that offer no substantive value. Most viewers merely laugh briefly without genuine practical value, returning to reality after fleeting entertainment without sustained engagement with the content, resulting in weak user stickiness.

#### 4.3 Insufficient Regulatory Oversight

The absence of "gatekeepers" has made short videos similar to general text content, dominated by vulgar material. Inadequate oversight allows such content to be published without boundaries, while users' desire for fame motivates many to publish boundary-pushing videos for notoriety. The internet's rapid dissemination means that by the time regulators discover problematic content, it has often already been forwarded tens of thousands of times, spawning imitation and ultimately corrupting social values.

### 5.1 Content Innovation

Regardless of era, "content is king" remains the unchanging standard. To establish a firm position in the multimedia wave, short videos must prioritize content quality by leading diverse topics and encouraging user innovation rather than relying solely on lip-syncing or funny GIF compilations, thereby breaking the imitation-dominated stalemate.

## 5.2 Integrating Platform Advantages

As the foundation for short video development, platforms must continuously undergo technological updates. With an increasing number of short video platforms, each possessing unique strengths, development requires absorbing these different advantages through improved video quality, innovative recording methods, and other user-attraction strategies.

## 5.3 Precise Audience Segmentation and Positioning

Different age groups have different preferences, resulting in varied short video content. Platforms should categorize content according to audience preferences and provide tailored recommendations based on these preferences to improve user satisfaction.

## 5.4 Enhanced Regulatory Oversight

Insufficient regulatory oversight is a common problem across various fields. Due to low production thresholds, short video content quality varies significantly. Strengthening regulatory intensity is a key consideration for new media era short videos. Methods such as pre-upload content review and user real-name authentication can regulate content. Only by intensifying oversight and standardizing short videos can user experience be improved and user stickiness increased, rather than pursuing temporary user volume that leads to fundamental user loss.

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

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