

Analysis of Documentary Creation and Dissemination in the New Media Environment (Post-print)

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Abstract

The emergence of new media has presented documentaries with new opportunities, bringing diversified financing channels, new types of dissemination platforms, and novel modes of transmission. In response to issues such as the constraints of the creative environment on documentary production and dissemination, grandiose yet hollow thematic concepts, and formulaic creative techniques, strategic research should be pursued through diversifying content selection, leveraging new internet formats, enhancing program interactivity, and adopting a multi-dimensional approach to dissemination channels.

Full Text

Preamble

Abstract: The emergence of new media presents fresh opportunities for documentaries, bringing diverse financing channels, novel dissemination platforms, and innovative communication methods. In response to problems constraining documentary creation and dissemination—such as restrictive creative environments, grandiose yet empty thematic content, and formulaic production techniques—strategies should be explored through content diversification, utilization of new internet formats, enhancement of program interactivity, and three-dimensional dissemination channels.

Keywords: new media environment; documentary; creation; dissemination

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1. Overview of Documentaries in the New Media Environment

Documentaries record authentic conditions of real life while also offering analysis and interpretation of certain phenomena. Their creation and dissemination should adhere to objective and truthful principles, serving as faithful representations of reality without subjective embellishment. However, the development of new media has brought traditional documentary creation to a bottleneck, as both content and dissemination methods increasingly fail to meet diverse public needs. Consequently, achieving organic integration between documentary creation and new media has become an inevitable trend. Documentaries must seize the momentum of new media development, actively pursue innovation, explore new dissemination methods and channels, and innovate content to continuously enhance media competitiveness, thereby improving documentary recognition and inspiring more talented creators to contribute to the field.

2. Opportunities Provided by the New Media Environment for Documentary Development

The new media environment offers opportunities across multiple dimensions, including diverse financing channels, novel dissemination platforms, and innovative communication methods.

2.1 Diverse Financing Channels

A Bite of China has gained widespread popularity in China, achieving high viewership ratings and demonstrating documentaries' development potential to enterprises and government entities, which have consequently increased investment to promote their corporate image. Simultaneously, advances in network technology have introduced crowdfunding as a viable financing channel, providing substantial financial support for documentary development. Productions can leverage crowdfunding to launch filming projects while intensifying promotional efforts to integrate documentaries into everyday life, further amplified by new media capabilities.

2.2 New Dissemination Platforms

In the internet era, various video websites have created space for documentary development. Popular platforms such as iQiyi, Youku, and Tencent have established dedicated documentary sections, providing broad dissemination platforms that satisfy audience viewing demands while boosting program ratings and website traffic. Additionally, influential sites organize diverse documentary award events that promote industry development, earn directors widespread acclaim, showcase their talents, and foster a vibrant, competitive landscape for Chinese documentaries.

2.3 Novel Communication Methods

Traditional documentaries typically represent a one-way information transmission process where audiences remain completely passive, merely receiving information without agency. Over time, this lack of interactive exchange breeds audience disengagement. New media has transformed this passive relationship, positioning audiences as active participants and greatly stimulating their initiative and engagement. Viewers can now watch programs anytime and anywhere while interacting based on their perspectives, ensuring freedom of expression, fostering a sense of participation, generating emotional resonance, and ultimately winning substantial audiences.

3. Problems in Documentary Creation and Dissemination in the New Media Environment

Key problems include constraints from the creative environment, grandiose yet empty thematic content, and formulaic production techniques.

3.1 Constrained by Creative Environment

Television media development is influenced by contemporary social conditions—favorable environments promote documentary creation while adverse ones hinder it. Currently, as material needs are satisfied, people increasingly pursue spiritual fulfillment. Documentaries have gradually entered public view, earning acclaim through their authentic reflection of life and objective presentation of facts. However, under market economy pressures, excessive pursuit of profit has led producers and directors to focus disproportionately on economic value, with strong profit-driven motivations causing them to emphasize artistic qualities while neglecting authenticity during creation and dissemination, ultimately undermining long-term documentary development.

3.2 Grandiose and Empty Thematic Content

Many Chinese television media outlets serve as national “mouthpieces,” making documentary content closely related to state policies, national cultural promotion, and similar themes as key vehicles for disseminating positive energy. Although new media has gradually diversified documentary content, the phenomenon of “fake, grand, and empty” themes persists, affecting development prospects.

3.3 Formulaic Creative Techniques

Current documentary production techniques have become largely formulaic, relying on exploration and observation as standard editing patterns. This singular approach renders program content and formats stale, reducing audience desire to watch. Worse still, award-winning documentaries often spawn countless im-

itators who replicate their techniques, resulting in homogenized programs that hinder industry development and innovation.

4. Strategies for Documentary Creation and Dissemination in the New Media Environment

Strategies should focus on content diversification, utilization of new internet formats, enhancement of program interactivity, and three-dimensional dissemination channels.

4.1 Selecting Diverse Content

Compared to foreign documentaries, Chinese documentaries suffer from limited subject matter that often diverges from real life and contemporary development, failing to provide experiential guidance. In the new media environment, documentary creation and dissemination should stay close to public life and reality, starting from audience needs to provide diverse services. Subject selection can be guided by big data analytics to create content that resonates with audiences, better offering guidance and assistance.

4.2 Utilizing New Internet Formats

Against an internet backdrop, new media advantages must be fully leveraged to facilitate documentary creation and dissemination. Productions should adapt to internet characteristics regarding duration, advertising design, and product packaging, conforming to internet development patterns while addressing program themes, presentation forms, and audience traits to create suitable content. In response to fragmentation caused by internet development, documentaries should be concise and succinct, using intense pacing and atmosphere to stimulate viewing enthusiasm. Additionally, necessary subtitles should be included to provide more intuitive experiences and enhance viewing comfort.

4.3 Enhancing Program Interactivity

New media not only brings opportunities and convenience to documentary creation and dissemination but also serves as an exchange platform between media and audiences, ensuring mutual communication. Documentary creation and dissemination should fully exploit new media's interactive advantages, effectively integrating diverse online information resources for sharing and interaction with others or media to better achieve innovation. Content selection can be conducted through voting on Weibo, websites, and other channels, while broadcast timing should be strategically chosen to trigger emotional resonance, attract widespread attention, generate discussion, and ultimately drive click-through rates and viewership.

4.4 Three-Dimensional Dissemination Channels

Compared to variety shows, films, and television dramas, documentaries often devote substantial time and energy to pre-production filming while neglecting post-production promotion, leaving audiences poorly informed and naturally reducing viewership. In the new media era, documentaries should engage in effective interaction with audiences via internet platforms from the outset, adjusting filming tasks based on viewer feedback. After completion, promotion through television, internet, posters, and other methods should raise program visibility, while simultaneous broadcasting on popular platforms like Tencent and iQiyi can attract audiences through content quality and enhance market competitiveness.

In this new era, documentaries have gradually entered public view, gaining popularity and promoting industry development. In the new media environment, documentary creation and dissemination must keep pace with the times, leverage network characteristics, continuously innovate, serve audiences diligently, elevate professional standards, and facilitate cultural exchange and dissemination.

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

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