

Research on Strategies for News Short Videos in the Converged Media Environment (Postprint)

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Abstract

In recent years, the rapid development of mobile Internet has presented both opportunities and new development paradigms for the journalism industry, while the formidable emergence of mobile short videos has inaugurated a new chapter in social media. Characterized by their concision, clarity, vividness, and liveliness, diverse forms of mobile short videos have swiftly garnered extensive user attention. Since 2016, the short video market has begun evolving toward refinement and verticalization, with news-oriented short video projects and platforms emerging and proliferating rapidly. Representative examples include “Our Video” from The Beijing News, “Arrow Factory” and “Watch News” from Jiemian, and “Time Video” from Beijing Time. Furthermore, self-media short video news production platforms exemplified by Pear Video have also emerged. Nevertheless, as time progresses, the development of information-based short videos has exhibited signs of waning momentum. This paper systematically examines the current developmental status and bottlenecks of information-based short videos within the converged media environment, endeavors to reinvigorate this medium, and provides reference points for further promoting its development.

Full Text

Preamble

Research on News Short Video Strategies in the Converged Media Environment

Abstract: In recent years, the rapid development of mobile internet has brought both opportunities and new models to the news industry. The emergence of mobile short videos has opened a new chapter in social interaction. With their concise, clear, and lively characteristics, diverse forms of mobile short videos have quickly captured the attention of large user bases. Since 2016, the short video market has begun moving toward refined and vertical

development, with news-focused short video projects and platforms emerging and growing rapidly. Examples include “We Video” from The Beijing News, “Arrow Factory” and “Kankan News” from Jiemian, and “Time Video” from Beijing Time. Additionally, there are self-media short video news production platforms represented by Pear Video. However, over time, the development of news short videos has begun to show signs of fatigue. This paper examines the current development status and bottlenecks of news short videos in the converged media environment, proposes strategies to revitalize news short videos, and provides references for further promoting their development.

Keywords: short video; news short video; development bottleneck; content production

1. The Rise and Current Development Status of News Short Videos

Since 2013, short videos have gradually emerged in China. The feature of instant shooting and posting enables interactive dialogue between mobile internet users through video as a communication medium. This application provides mobile internet users with a new social form that integrates production and sharing, while short videos have also found application in news reporting. The advantages of short videos, combined with their social interaction attributes, have laid the foundation for their popularization among the public, thus providing a user base for news media to adopt this application in a timely manner.

Short videos are defined as video content measured in seconds, generally within five minutes, primarily shot and edited quickly through mobile intelligent terminals, and shared in real-time through seamless integration with social media platforms [?]. As internet technology improves and mobile intelligent terminals become more widespread, user demands have become increasingly diversified. With their extensive content, flexible formats, strong social attributes, and high participation rates, short videos have gradually become an important component of the media structure, continuously influencing and changing people's lifestyles.

In early 2016, papi 酱, described as “a woman who combines beauty and talent,” became an internet sensation with her self-directed, self-performed satirical short videos. Almost simultaneously, short video platforms experienced explosive growth. In February of that year, the short video platform Kuaishou surpassed 300 million users, and in March, papi 酱 secured 12 million RMB in substantial financing. On September 20, Zhang Yiming, CEO of Toutiao, announced that the company would allocate at least one billion RMB over the next year to subsidize short video creators, a move seen as significant recognition and validation of the short video format. In March 2017, Kuaishou announced it had received 350 million USD in investment led by Tencent, while around the same time, the updated version of NetEase Cloud Music made short videos a major

highlight. In early April, Alibaba's Cultural and Entertainment Group held a short video strategy conference, announcing that Tudou would fully transform into a short video platform and would invest two billion RMB in the "Big Fish Plan" to encourage and support content creation. These initiatives have pushed mobile short videos into a new stage, drawing greater attention to seeking deeper development in this emerging field.

In July 2016, Jiemian News, from China's largest newspaper group Shanghai United Media, announced after completing over 300 million RMB in financing that it would enter the original video and audio fields on a large scale, claiming to invest 100 million RMB in video and form a young and passionate filming team. On October 20, this video project, named "Arrow Factory," fired its first arrow into the short video domain with "China's King of Shouting MC Tianyou: What If YY Collapses One Day?", which subsequently attracted online attention. In September, Kankan News, under the SMG Group, officially launched, positioning itself as original video news with a unique identity in the internet world, adhering to the principle that "news is its core, video is its characteristic, and live streaming is its highlight." In October, The Beijing News jointly launched "We Video" with Tencent, aiming to create the best mobile news video. In November of the same year, Qiu Bing, former CEO of The Paper, left to create Pear Video, determined to build China's most engaging news short video platform, striving to present the essence of news events. In January 2017, Pengpai Video launched, focusing on news live streaming and short videos. In May, Beijing Time launched its pan-information short video platform "Time Video," which achieved 400 million views within two months. This spread of "videoization" in news not only brings new transformations to media development but also heralds a new spring for news short videos.

In traditional concepts, information refers to content that users can obtain and utilize in a relatively short time to provide value to themselves. However, in today's mobile short video era, the concept of information is changing. Currently, "information" is gradually being replaced by "pan-information." The term "pan" literally means extensive, popular, and universal, so pan-information can be understood as information for the masses or information that the public cares about. Wang Xing, Vice President of Beijing Time, explained: "Compared with news, the concept of information is broader, and pan-information is even broader. It can basically cover people's information needs." Qiu Bing, founder of Pear Video, also mentioned a new concept of information in an interview: "In terms of topic selection, the more it can express human complexity, provide sufficient on-site feeling, and possess positive value orientation, the more it will become the editor's first choice; the narrative form strives to be expressed in a story-like manner, reflecting the relationship between people and the world, rejecting preachy lecturing." Combined, these criteria essentially refer to topics or stories that can trigger phenomenon-level discussions on social platforms.

However, despite being controlled by major media organizations, news short videos have not entered the anticipated prosperous phase. After comprehen-

sively comparing the conditions of various short video platforms mentioned earlier, the results are not entirely satisfactory. This study selected popular news short videos on Weibo's "Miaopai" platform with over one million views within the most recent month (spanning from July 14 to August 14, 2017) as analysis objects.

As shown in Table 1, social news short videos occupy a certain position across all platforms. To some extent, one could even say that short videos with social themes have become one of the main products of these platforms. By focusing on hot social news, staying close to users' daily lives, and concentrating on emergencies, these videos resonate more easily with audiences, and the resulting high playback volumes provide some comfort to producers and operators. Additionally, it is evident that while the average video update cycles are almost identical across platforms, the number of popular news short videos produced varies significantly. While this could be interpreted as differences in platform content production strategies, it is also a point that warrants further attention from major platforms. Overall, the characteristics of instant shooting and timely sharing of news short videos align well with current users' new social trends and satisfy their need for fragmented browsing. This video format of information provides users with more authentic experiences, enriching not only the forms of news reporting itself but also extending discourse space through interactive discussions among users.

It is worth noting that during data collection, the author found that most content on major news short video platforms follows the PGC (Professionally Generated Content) model, while the UGC (User Generated Content) model, where users serve as the original force of video production, is relatively rare. Meanwhile, user interaction on various platforms on Weibo is relatively minimal. Most daily short videos have only dozens of comments and likes at the bottom, with some having only a few. Only a few popular news videos with over one million views can reach thousands of comments and tens of thousands of likes. This 侧面 indicates that there is still considerable room for improvement in user participation and interactivity in short video development, and that the further prosperity of news short videos still has a long way to go.

2. Bottlenecks in the Development of News Short Videos

In the early stages of news short video development, short videos greatly enhanced user activity by capitalizing on pan-entertainment content and satisfying users' curiosity-seeking psychology. However, this also sowed the seeds for 透支 user enthusiasm. On one hand, with the rise of short video platforms like Kuaishou, labels such as crude and vulgar have become synonymous with short video content. On the other hand, user fatigue and weariness toward short videos have gradually become apparent, triggering controversies over content and topic selection. Some problems inherent in short videos are also reflected in the development of news short videos. The author analyzes the current bottlenecks encountered in news short video development from four aspects: platform,

content, user, and technology.

2.1 Platform—Monetization Challenges

As is well known, a solid material foundation is necessary to support further stable development. Platform expansion inevitably requires substantial capital investment. Wang Xing, Vice President of Beijing Time, stated: “I don’t know how to monetize yet, but with users comes money.” He frankly admitted: “To be honest, I still don’t know how to make money. When company colleagues ask me how to generate revenue, I tell them that having users means having money. People currently have a very strong demand for news short videos. What the platform needs most are reliable content suppliers, but this market is currently severely undersupplied. If we dive in and acquire users, we have a chance to get funding. Business logic works this way. I tell my sales colleagues that I’ll bring back users and view counts, and they need to figure out how to monetize.”

In fact, not only Beijing Time but almost all current news short video platforms face this monetization issue. To further increase market share in mobile short videos, “commercial monetization” has become a top priority for development. Current short video platforms mainly have three profit models: advertising, tipping, and e-commerce. Among them, advertising, or short video marketing, is undoubtedly an important driving force for monetization. Compared with mature video marketing that can insert advertisements and product placements creatively, mobile short video marketing is still in an “exploratory” stage. On one hand, advertisers need to further adapt to and accept its marketing methods; on the other hand, the platforms themselves lack mature methods to perfectly integrate brand information with their short videos.

2.2 Content—Scarcity of Quality Information

Although short videos have taken over from live streaming as the new focus in the video field, the prerequisite conditions for playing videos on mobile terminals—namely, data 流量 or wireless networks—cannot be ignored by the public. In today’s fragmented era, the popularization of 4G networks has greatly improved internet speed, basically meeting the network conditions required for users to watch videos online. However, the lifestyle habit of using data to watch videos cultivated by this development is rather luxurious, and the psychology of domestic users 心疼流量 cannot be changed in a short time. In the future, the further development of news short videos presents a technical challenge for major platforms.

In the converged media environment, mobile internet development has created massive amounts of information, but the quality is inevitably uneven. In the early stages of short video development, the emergence of “viral” videos mostly fell into the category of recreational cultural products, primarily featuring humorous and entertaining pan-entertainment content. In contrast, news short videos that truly deliver high-quality, beneficial information to users are ex-

tremely rare. The rise of news short videos has further concentrated information while inevitably making messages more fragmented. Additionally, short videos tend to focus on stating objective facts and lack in-depth ideological exploration, making it difficult for them to carry substantial content. How to balance the relationship between short video duration and presenting complete information, and how to select and arrange short video content, pose significant challenges for producers. At the same time, content distribution for short videos suffers from serious homogenization. For example, when a “traffic” news video becomes popular and attracts significant online attention, it is followed by various platforms reporting different “traffic news.” This competitive approach of mutual imitation not only fails to support users’ needs for diverse information but also easily triggers user aversion, ultimately leading to user loss. How to build a unique brand, attract more attention, and form a distinctive user group appears crucial in the further development of news short video platforms.

2.3 User—Low Production Participation

As mentioned earlier, the development of mobile internet has submerged users in an ocean of information. The mixed quality of information delivered through short videos has compromised user experience. Additionally, the operational models of some news short video platforms differ from the traditional “small but beautiful” approach, choosing instead to take large strides in pursuit of “high and comprehensive” coverage while 衍生 numerous complex column categories that confuse many first-time users and affect their “return usage.” Furthermore, the emergence of homogenized content has intensified user psychological aversion, gradually wearing down users’ enthusiasm for new news short videos and further leading to continuously declining enthusiasm for producing short videos and participating in discussions.

Regrettably, increased usage of mobile terminals does not represent recognition and acceptance of news short videos. A researcher investigating domestic short video audience attitudes found that nearly half of the respondents had never used or were unclear whether they had used short video news software. Meanwhile, 46.50% had a vague understanding of the concept of short video news, and nearly 20% were completely unfamiliar with it. Additionally, as a “hot medium,” short videos provide real visual impact that fills users’ thought blanks to some extent, leading users to consume short videos without thinking more deeply about the news implications behind them.

3. Strategies for Revitalizing News Short Video Development

As one of the future forms of news development, short videos harbor tremendous potential that deserves further exploration. The author continues to analyze strategies for news short video development from the perspectives of platform, content, user, and technology.

3.1 Platform—Seeking New Development Models

In the news short video industry riding the wave of opportunity, enhancing “gold-digging” capabilities is crucial for further development. Major platforms should first more accurately determine their positioning to form a stable user base, as “having users means having money.” As previously mentioned, advertising marketing is undoubtedly an important driving force for short video monetization. Therefore, platforms can learn from traditional video marketing by cultivating content teams and collaborative mechanisms that create viral content, continuously exploring and deriving mature methods to combine advertising with brand videos.

Due to their unique news attributes, news short video platforms need to skillfully 嫁接 advertising marketing and tipping profit models. Traditional video ads often appear as pre-roll or post-roll ads, but news short videos are relatively short, making it urgent to find clever timing for ad insertion. As Wang Xing, Vice President of Beijing Time, stated: “How do we do pre-roll ads? A one-minute video with a 15-second ad is doomed to fail. What about 10 seconds? Five seconds? Can the public accept it? Can advertisers accept it?” Regarding tipping as a monetization method, it can basically only be understood as users voluntarily paying for videos. However, domestic users have not yet formed the habit of paying for news content. Therefore, to achieve monetization, platforms need to further strengthen their brand awareness and copyright protection. In this regard, they can learn from the famous American short video news website Newsy, which currently has three main profit models: news licensing fees, link commissions, and customized media services.

3.2 Content—Enhancing Awareness and Ability to Mine Valuable Content

In the mobile internet era, massive supply and precise delivery are extremely important. Major news short video platforms should strengthen their ability to screen information and enhance their awareness of mining valuable content, promoting clear and distinct platform positioning to highlight individuality amidst homogenized content, improve user experience, and enhance user stickiness.

One noteworthy point is that as an expressive medium, video’s polysemy and intuitiveness can generate tremendous influence. In the world of video, “seeing is not necessarily believing,” because through editing and post-production, completely different meanings can be presented. Those of us who have experienced short videos have more or less encountered these “fake news” incidents. Therefore, the further development of news short videos inevitably requires self-discipline from platforms and producers, strengthening their video production literacy and adhering to journalistic authenticity. Regardless of how future news formats may evolve, high-quality news and information will always be paramount.

In 2017, the short video industry was experiencing its second wave of transfor-

mation from UGC (User Generated Content) to PGC (Professionally Generated Content), with content consumers and creators gradually becoming a community of shared interests. Therefore, news short videos seeking further development can also start from vertical fields. Just as Weibo's development relies on the continuous growth of content producers, platforms should continuously explore vertical fields of news content, increase the daily average number of video postings, and drive development through content, making their expression forms more three-dimensional and diversified, thereby increasing platform traffic while further enhancing commercialization capabilities.

3.3 User—Increasing Support for User Participation

To enhance user interaction with news short videos, platforms need to provide timely content that interests users. However, it is important to note that pushing users' favorite news short videos does not mean catering to them without bottom lines. Instead, it means improving the acuity and insight for news production, carefully screening valuable content to present to users. Additionally, platforms need to deeply process fragmented information. In the current pursuit of "fast pace and simplicity," effectively collecting large amounts of information content, integrating it, and presenting the essence professionally through video is crucial, while also providing users with more practical experiences.

3.4 Technology—Cooperating with Carriers

Undoubtedly, carriers can play a very important role in breaking through the limitations of using networks and data to watch videos. In recent years, carriers have been increasing their efforts to 定向 release video data 流量. For example, in 2017, China Unicom's Wo Video already achieved standard-definition data-free streaming for Unicom network users. On March 2, 2017, Weibo partnered with China Unicom to launch an exclusive SIM card product—the Weibo Micro Card—which was first launched in Jiangsu Province. This marked Weibo's first deep cooperation with a carrier on an exclusive phone card. The card includes two products: Weibo V Card and Weibo Big V Card, both of which include data-free usage for images and videos within Weibo, as well as Miaopai, Yizhibo, Tiantian Tong, Sina News, and other family products. It is reported that in the future, independent use of these applications will also be completely data-free, undoubtedly becoming a highlight of low-cost, data-free phone cards. This demonstrates that to enable users to watch news short videos anytime and anywhere, platforms should strengthen cooperation with carriers to further achieve mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

The 爆发 of news short videos is closely related to users, but the preferences of the new generation of young people have become difficult to grasp. They yearn for freedom, 标榜 individuality, and like to occupy an active position. These characteristics pose challenges for the further development of news short videos. However, as long as major platforms remain loyal to news and strive to present the highest quality news before users' eyes, all problems will be solved. In the

internet era, those who ultimately stand firm and achieve victory will be those who understand users.

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

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