

Postprint: The Convergent Development Path of Mobile Short-Form Video under the UGC Model

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Abstract

The development of network technology has propelled the proliferation of smart terminals and the reduction of marginal costs for data transmission. Leveraging China's massive internet user dividend, domestic mobile short-video platforms have emerged forcefully, heralding the advent of mobile short-video-based social networking. Mobile short videos offer users a novel video production experience, cater to their individualized needs, and foster new forms of public opinion arenas and content economies; however, the profit model remains ill-defined, user retention costs are substantial, and data traffic expenses are prohibitively high. This paper delineates the concept of UGC, systematically examines the characteristics and evolutionary trajectory of mobile short videos, and through an analysis of their developmental patterns and distinctive features, proposes strategies to overcome barriers to growth and viable recommendations for future development under the UGC model.

Full Text

The Integration and Development Path of Mobile Short Videos in UGC Mode

Abstract: The development of network technology has driven the popularization of smart terminals and reduced the marginal cost of data transmission. Leveraging China's massive internet user dividend, domestic mobile short video platforms have made a strong debut, ushering in the era of mobile short video-based social interaction. Mobile short videos provide users with a brand-new video production experience, satisfy personalized needs, and create novel forms of public opinion fields and content economies. However, the profit model remains unclear, user retention costs are high, and data fees are expensive. This paper defines UGC, systematically reviews the characteristics and development trajectory of mobile short videos, and proposes solutions to development bar-

riers and feasible recommendations for future growth through analysis of their developmental patterns and distinctive features.

Keywords: UGC; mobile short video; integrated development

As telecommunication data transmission technology advances and mobile internet costs decrease, mobile video has become an increasingly popular form of online content and social interaction. 2016 marked the inaugural year of video content entrepreneurship. Zhang Quanling, a former CCTV journalist who transitioned to internet investment, once stated, “What kind of content will make money in the future? Video! Although video conveys far less information per unit time than text and images, this format will certainly become the trend.” From “Yi Tiao” and “Er Geng” to “Papi Jiang,” mobile short videos have continuously broken records for views and traffic value among self-media content, attracting substantial social capital investment into this booming market. Within less than a year in 2015, dozens of products emerged beyond “Mei Pai” and “Miao Pai,” including “Xiao Ka Xiu,” “Mi Mi,” “Qu Pai,” “Xiao Ying,” and “Dou Pai.” Social platforms such as WeChat Moments, QQ Friend Updates, and Momo successively introduced short video recording and upload functions. Short video applications provide users with a fresh video creation experience, delivering social gratification through video sharing and forwarding, while satisfying the demand for foolproof, simplified operation of professional video shooting and editing. Personalized built-in special effects enable everyone to become a micro-video production expert. UGC generates massive volumes of user-created content, testing the information carrying capacity and monetization capabilities of short video platforms. How to carve out a path in this turbulent competitive red ocean and maintain user growth are critical concerns for current short video platforms.

1. Overview of UGC Mode

UGC (User Generated Content) refers to user-created original content, representing a new way for internet users to engage with online platforms—users showcase their original content via internet platforms or provide it to other users. The UGC model is a product of the internet’s evolution toward satisfying user personalization needs, emerging during the Web 2.0 era. This model transforms internet users from content consumers into content producers; users are not merely recipients of online information but also creators of online content. Neil Postman once said, “The social changes brought about by a new mode of information transmission go far beyond its content; its greater significance lies in defining the speed, sources, quantity, and context of information, thereby profoundly affecting social relationships, structures, and culture within specific time and space.” The UGC content production model revolutionizes information dissemination through convenient production methods, high-information-density formats, rapid propagation speeds, and massive quantities.

2. Characteristics of Short Videos in UGC Mode

Short videos in UGC mode possess both general characteristics of information dissemination and special attributes of internet product content. First, UGC mobile short videos are inherently social. Social functionality is crucial for internet products to enhance user stickiness, and the social nature of mobile short videos manifests in platform features such as sharing, forwarding, liking, commenting, and collecting, as well as online interactions like following and @-mentions between content creators and viewers. Although short video content is limited in duration, a single high-quality clip can resonate with countless users, generating massive social information beyond the video itself and increasing user dependence on the platform.

Second, mobile short videos are highly operable. Mobile short video applications generally provide simple and user-friendly video production and polishing tools, enabling users to achieve professional non-linear video editing effects through simple operations, creating high-quality micro-videos with excellent visual and audio quality, and providing users with an outstanding content creation experience. Mei Pai is the most powerful application for content shooting and beautification, offering various editing templates and soundtracks for one-click clip generation, along with multiple personalized soundtrack and visual effect options, transforming many grassroots video enthusiasts into loyal users.

Finally, mobile short videos exhibit authenticity. Compared with text and image content, short videos are more authentic. UGC short videos primarily appear in long-take formats, and while video software processing may enhance audio-visual effects, the authenticity of content remains unchanged—editing and special effects functions mainly enrich presentation methods. On one hand, users need short videos to showcase real social phenomena, genuine stories, or to build well-rounded personal social media images rather than false or fabricated ones. On the other hand, video represents the maximum restoration of the real world, making it the most authentic content format, which explains the public's 狂热喜爱 for short videos.

3. Development History of Mobile Short Video Platforms in UGC Mode

UGC mobile short videos emerged from the development of micro-videos. Micro-videos feature short duration, low production costs, diverse content, high user participation, and flexible formats as a new media form. YouTube was born in the United States in 2005, pioneering the concept of “video sharing platforms.” Meanwhile, China’s internet development had already established the technical conditions and user foundation for video websites. In the same year, the localized video sharing site Tudou launched, followed by Youku in 2006. The two major video platforms engaged in fierce competition, kicking off an era where grassroots directors and online self-media competed on the same stage. High-quality short videos won widespread popularity, becoming powerful IPs, with

web series and theatrical films adapted from short videos achieving considerable success, such as “Wan Wan Mei Xiang Dao” and “Diao Si Nan Shi.” For several years thereafter, video sharing platforms remained PC-based. In 2011, American platform Viddy launched, introducing the concept of “video sharing community” to China. Viddy enabled one-click publishing of short videos to social platforms like YouTube and Facebook. In August 2013, Weibo launched the “Miao Pai” video sharing community, and Tencent launched its “Wei Shi” application in September 2013. In December 2013, China’s telecommunications industry entered the 4G era, breaking through user bottlenecks for short video social interaction. In 2014, “Mei Pai” produced by Meitu Company became the most downloaded short video application.

4.1 Expanding Live Streaming Functions

Mobile short video applications must accelerate functional updates, prioritizing user experience enhancement. On one hand, they should continuously improve short video production and dissemination by adding special effects resources to satisfy users’ personalized creation needs, drawing on domestic and international sound effects, soundtracks, filters, and special functions like facial recognition and motion capture to enhance playability. On the other hand, they should develop functions beyond short videos, particularly live streaming capabilities. In April 2015, Madonna released her new “Ghosttown” music video on live streaming app Meerkat, achieving 100,000 views within just five minutes. The Pacquiao vs. Mayweather “Fight of the Century” was also live-streamed. The interactivity and documentary nature of live streaming rapidly captured massive user bases. Following the popularity of foreign live streaming apps, domestic live streaming software emerged competitively, and traditional short video platforms including Mei Pai, Kuaishou, Momo, Youku Tudou, and Miao Pai have all introduced live streaming functions.

4.2 Mutual Benefit with the News Industry

The instant shooting, production, and rapid dissemination functions of short videos are highly suitable for news information 传播. Short video platforms serve not only as news distribution channels but also as important sources of first-hand news materials for traditional media. Short videos make news ubiquitous and news material acquisition cheaper and more convenient. In 2013, a Turkish journalist first used short video app Vine to shoot and disseminate footage of a suicide bombing attack outside the U.S. Embassy in Turkey. The BBC launched the Instafax news section on Instagram, while CNN opened a news video service “Your 15 Second Morning” on Twitter. Cooperation between traditional news media and short video platforms injects fresh air into content production for new internet media. Mobile short videos have awakened to the exposure of news materials, showing a trend toward professionalized news reporting and giving birth to some high-quality professional news teams using short video applications as distribution platforms. This cooperation extends the reach of

news media while providing them with continuous fresh news materials.

4.3 Building a Lightweight Marketing Tool

The short duration of short videos can fill audiences' fragmented time. As short video platforms develop, they have broken through the second-limit restriction, producing videos exceeding five minutes, creating opportunities for advertising placement. The powerful popularity gathered by short video social interaction and the media effect of internet celebrities create a massive advertising goldmine. Short video platforms can open corresponding marketing sections and products for enterprises and media. Well-known brands such as Pepsi, Beats, and Cadillac have all ridden the short video wave, opening verified accounts on short video platforms to produce exquisite video ads for free distribution. For example, before the release of the movie "Mojin: The Lost Legend," the marketing team distributed trailers on Sina, WeChat, Mei Pai, and other platforms, achieving excellent promotional results.

4.4 Achieving Cross-boundary Cooperation

As a new internet media form, short videos must actively participate in media convergence amid deepening triple-network integration, including resource interoperability in software and device compatibility in hardware. Currently, China's triple-network integration has achieved fruitful results, with multi-screen interactive functions among televisions, mobile phones, and computers already realized. In network environments, mobile terminals can watch internet TV, and televisions can use online video software. Technologies currently enabling multi-screen interaction between TVs and smartphones include Mini HDMI/MHL, Airplay, Miracast, and DLNA. Video platforms such as LeTV, Tencent Video, and Sohu Video all feature DLNA functionality, and the development of multi-screen interactive technology can expand space for short video development. Additionally, in terms of content creation, short video platforms can distribute public service advertisements to create a favorable advertising ecosystem. Rather than limiting themselves to online advertising marketing, they should emphasize offline event marketing with other industries, organizing offline user meetups, product symposiums, or brand marketing activities, all of which will enhance brand awareness of short video media and provide users with better experiences.

In the mobile short video field, solving current issues related to video traffic, quality, and content from a technical perspective is key. With the development of mobile internet, scenario-based social interaction will expand the application scope of mobile short videos. As communication technology advances, mobile video traffic and quality issues will improve. With upgrades in mobile hardware technology, post-production processing on mobile phones will become easier. This indicates that mobile short videos have bright development prospects.

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

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