
AI translation • View original & related papers at
chinaxiv.org/items/chinaxiv-202310.02952

Production and Broadcasting Strategies for Short-Form News Videos in the Context of Fragmented User Time (Postprint)

Authors: Jiahang Wang, Zhang Jingqi

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal News Short Video Production and Broadcasting Strategies in the Context of Fragmented User Time CLC Classification: G210 Document Code: A Article ID: 1671-0134(2017)12-050-02 DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2017.01.005 Authors: Wang Jiahang, Zhang Jingqi

Full Text

Preamble: Watchtower Column

ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal

News Short Video Production and Broadcasting Strategies in the Context of Fragmented User Time

CLC Classification: G210 Document Code: A Article ID: 1671-0134(2017)12-050-02

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2017.01.005

Authors: Wang Jiahang, Zhang Jingqi

Introduction

Driven by widespread smartphone adoption, improved network coverage, and mobile social platforms emerging as a new investment hotspot with substantial financial backing, news short videos have entered the market en masse. However, producing and broadcasting short videos is clearly not as simple as truncating long-form content. How should news short videos be produced to adapt to fragmented user time? Based on a comprehensive examination of practices by short video producers both domestically and internationally, we argue that three key strategies should guide news short video production and broadcasting.

1. Shorter: Countering Continuous Fragmentation of User Time

How short should short videos be? Different practitioners offer varying answers. Some applications attempt to deliver important news summaries within 15-second clips, while BBC editors and journalists have been “told that video length should generally be controlled at around 1-1.5 minutes. Unless the story itself and the filming are exceptional, this length should not be exceeded.” Major American social platforms and news video services set their short video limits at under one minute—for instance, VINE allows only 6 seconds, and Snapchat permits 10 seconds. Synthesizing viewing patterns of popular short videos both domestically and internationally, the trend suggests that short videos should become even shorter. Currently, domestic short videos remain insufficiently “short.”

We conducted a statistical analysis of videos pushed by Pear Video, a short video startup that received 500 million RMB in investment. The results show that during November 2016, Pear Video’s Toutiao account pushed 22 short videos with an average duration of 167.5 seconds (2 minutes 47.5 seconds), the longest reaching 741 seconds (12 minutes 21 seconds) and the shortest at 45 seconds. Among the top 10 most-viewed videos on this account (see Table 1), the average duration was 124.8 seconds (2 minutes 4.8 seconds).

Three factors necessitate even shorter news short videos. First, news short videos are consumed by users during highly fragmented time periods without intentional viewing. While niche content such as gardening or magic tricks can afford to be longer as long as they suit mobile viewing, news short videos—characterized by incidental and spontaneous information acquisition—must be even more concise. Second, user time is becoming increasingly fragmented. According to data, “by June 2016, China’s mobile internet user base reached 656 million, an increase of 36.56 million from the end of 2015. The proportion of internet users accessing the internet via mobile phones rose from 90.1% at the end of 2015 to 92.5%.” Beyond busy periods, nearly all remaining time constitutes fragmented moments. Modern life has been fragmented by smartphones: commuting on subways, flight delays, waiting for meals—these fragments collectively account for approximately one-third of a day. News short video production and distribution must accommodate video consumption scenarios in fragmented time, making “brevity” the primary strategy. Third, distribution of news short videos must consider the convenience of social sharing. Users are often unwilling to share complete video clips but prefer to share impactful news video scenes.

International practices in Europe and America demonstrate similar or even shorter trends compared to Pear Video’s top 10 videos. The Pew Research Center began studying YouTube viewing data as early as 2012, concluding that the most popular videos were approximately 2.1 minutes long. A Reuters Institute report indicates that “a key characteristic of successful online video news

is brevity, with most durations under one minute.” In 2014, the BBC launched Instafax, a short video news service on Instagram, to facilitate quick information acquisition for users.

2. The UGC Imperative

The critical factor determining whether short videos can become mainstream content products for user information acquisition and sharing lies in whether the quantity and quality of UGC (user-generated content) can rapidly improve. To some extent, short videos currently remain in a phase of rapid PGC (professionally-generated content) entry. While PGC may deliver higher-quality video content, explosive growth in news short videos requires integration between media and UGC.

An analysis of Pear Video’s existing content reveals limited subject matter diversity. Although short videos are considered the next frontier in content industry, most content entrepreneurs focus on information and vertical sectors. We examined the top five entries on Toutiao’s video influence “Established Brands” list for five consecutive weeks from October 24 to November 27, 2016. Those ranking in the top five for three or more weeks included Toutiao accounts such as Maxonor Creative Era, Magician Lin Jianwei, and Daily Military Review (military topics), with no news short video accounts making the list. Among Pear Video’s 22 news videos in November 2016, 18 were social topics (81.8%), 2 were international topics (9.1%), and 2 were celebrity entertainment topics (9.1%)—demonstrating significant homogenization.

The transformative potential of news short videos lies in the evolution of on-line news production and consumption models. Currently, news production, dissemination, and consumption patterns have been reset. Industry chains have lengthened, and content producers are accelerating their separation from distribution platforms. Distribution platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Toutiao have become primary channels for users to access news videos. Content producers have diversified, with professional television institutions, portal websites, video production companies, small studios, independent journalists, and ordinary users all joining the short video production ecosystem. Liu Tong, Director of Video Operations at Toutiao, notes that “news event dissemination models have also changed. When a news event occurs, the media coverage path evolves as follows: first mobile livestreaming, then short video dissemination, followed by graphic and text publication, and finally in-depth reporting.” This new model is particularly evident in breaking news coverage. The disruptive significance of this new news dissemination model is that content convergence in the media integration process is truly realized at the user consumption terminal. In this news consumption model, users no longer distinguish between original media attributes such as video versus text, nor do they differentiate content producers by traditional media channels like print or television.

Based on this model, future strategies for media group news short videos should

prioritize breaking news and localized content. Reuters Institute reports show that when major breaking events occur, online news video viewership surges dramatically. “After the Paris terrorist attacks, the BBC published 175 videos on its official website, plus 41 related videos on Facebook, and 22 and 31 videos on Twitter and YouTube respectively. Video views peaked 24 hours after the event. Among these videos, a 90-second clip of a victim’s family addressing ISIS killers, edited by the BBC and posted on Facebook, received 72 million views, 4 million likes, 1.5 million shares, and 300,000 comments.” As shown in Table 1, videos about breaking events and news subjects are particularly popular among Pear Video’s top 10.

How can media groups enhance their short video reporting capabilities for breaking and localized news? Excavating on-site video materials and strengthening UGC content development and secondary utilization is the necessary path. Despite massive production, video teams face severe shortages of on-site materials. Even well-resourced media groups with editorial rights cannot always capture news scenes firsthand, making UGC content development and utilization critically important. Reuters research also shows that among the 140 most popular video news clips with audio, only 13% featured professional journalists reporting or narrating; 51% primarily used synchronous sound from news subjects, and 36% used only music, natural sound, or no sound at all. This indicates that short videos should prioritize footage from the scene, and the fastest way to reach the first scene is to aggregate user-produced videos. Currently, domestic short video platforms have not sufficiently developed user-produced video content. Pear Video has established partnerships with 3,100 “citizen journalists” across 520 cities domestically and internationally, providing professional training on shooting angles and techniques. After citizen journalists upload materials, professional teams conduct post-production editing and mixing. However, our statistical analysis of Pear Video’s UGC upload channel “Citizen Journalist” reveals that while approximately 30 videos are uploaded daily, the topics are relatively homogeneous. During the week of November 25-31, 2016, not a single video from citizen journalists was pushed on Pear Video’s Toutiao account, nor was any citizen journalist content repurposed.

3. Diversified Subjects: A Sign of Moving Toward Mainstream Application

News short video production and broadcasting should prioritize greater subject matter diversification. Short videos are expected to drive two major transformations in video production: first, video production will shift from the PGC era to the UGC era, with video sharing becoming the mainstream application for ordinary internet users’ social interaction; second, video production will fundamentally change discourse patterns, with traditional television broadcasting styles being transformed in mobile videos. However, judging from current development, news short videos have not yet entered their peak innovation period. Beyond exploring various production techniques, reporting subjects should be

further diversified to gradually enter an era of all-user participation.

References

- [1] Tencent Quanmeipai. How Short Should Short Videos Be? <http://news.qq.com/original/quanmeipai/daunsl>
- [2] Chen Yi. Understanding the Current State and Future of Online Video News through the Reuters Institute 2016 Digital News Report [J]. Chinese Journalist, 2016(10).
- [3] Tencent Quanmeipai. BBC Must Lower Its Stance and Learn from Buzzfeed! <http://news.qq.com/original/quanmeipai/bbcbuzzfeed.html>.
- [4] China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC). 38th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development. <http://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxxzb/>.
- [5] From Liu Tong's lecture at the Graduate School of Communication, China University of Political Science and Law, November 28.
- [6] Chen Yi. Understanding the Current State and Future of Online Video News through the Reuters Institute 2016 Digital News Report [J]. Chinese Journalist, 2016(10).

Author Information

Wang Jiahang is an Associate Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication, China University of Political Science and Law. **Zhang Jingqi** is a Master's student at the School of Journalism and Communication, China University of Political Science and Law.

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

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.