

The 4th Media Convergence and Innovation Forum in Beijing Discusses the Development and Future of Short Videos Content, IP, and Capital Will Become the Three Pillars of Short Video Development IP Adaptation, Intelligentization, and E-commerce Are the Directions; Should Guard Against Emotional Exc...

Authors:

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Abstract

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Preamble

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Forum Overview

On the afternoon of December 20, 2016, the “4th Media Convergence and Innovation Forum” was successfully held at Beijing Normal University, jointly organized by the College of Arts and Media, the School of Journalism and Communication, and the Capital Institute for Cultural Innovation and Dissemination. The forum brought together distinguished scholars and senior industry practitioners for a cross-disciplinary brainstorming session on “The Development and Future of Short-Form Video.”

The distinguished guests included leaders from traditional print media, explorers from new media platforms, renowned professors from academia, and pioneering practitioners from the industry. Grounding their perspectives in broader media convergence trends, they offered unique insights on critical issues including the evaluation of short-form video content and form, approaches to content production, and strategies for market development. These discussions provided an intellectual feast for nearly one hundred attending media professionals, researchers, and students. The forum was chaired by Professor Yu Dan, Vice Dean of the College of Arts and Media at Beijing Normal University and Director of the Capital Institute for Cultural Innovation and Dissemination.

[FIGURE:N]

Below is a compilation of expert perspectives from the forum.

Opening Remarks: Professor Yu Dan

In her opening address, Professor Yu Dan noted that when short-form video first emerged, many dismissed it as child’s play, questioning what substantive content it could possibly carry and whether it would ever achieve genuine popularity. Today, however, short-form video has become a fundamental mode of communication. In recent years, the media industry has developed at such breakneck speed under convergence pressures that various irregularities have emerged. The forum aimed to leverage expert insights to deepen understanding of short-form video and enhance predictions about its future trajectory.

[FIGURE:N]

Professor Yu Dan warned that excessive emotional content could desensitize audiences to human suffering and social issues, ultimately deepening mutual suspicion and creating new problems for social communication. Therefore, while recognizing the tremendous flow of diverse cultures enabled by short-form video, we must also remain vigilant against emotional manipulation and clickbait-style sensationalism. Without structural frameworks, the emotional overflow in short-form video could lead to desensitization and increased social 隔阂, representing a critical challenge that must be addressed in the medium’s future development.

Keynote: Professor Yu Guoming

Yu Guoming, Executive Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Beijing Normal University, delivered a speech on “Technology-Driven Media Transformation and Development Trends.” He argued that the most significant changes in the media sector over the past decade have been driven by technological breakthroughs, which determine not only the macro-level structure of the industry but also specific business models and operational processes. Using Weibo as an example, he explained how its 140-character limit—initially a mere technical specification—profoundly shaped modes of expression, priorities, and the prominence of certain content and personalities. Those who could effectively select emotionally impactful facts and disseminate them appropriately became media heroes of that era. The initial Weibo competition essentially centered on the ability to emotionally resonate with and mobilize society. However, once these formal constraints were relaxed, the platform’s dynamics shifted in new directions. This illustrates how simple technical specifications can prescribe content, priorities, and influence, demonstrating technology’s profound impact.

Short-form video represents a new trend that serves as one of the most socially mobilizing forms of expression in interpersonal and social information exchange. Among text, audio, and video, video is the most emotionally evocative and mobilizing medium. When technology makes this expressive tool simple and accessible, enabling grassroots-level dissemination with high social mobilization potential, it inevitably produces cultural diversity. This new format will structurally transform social rules and perceptual experiences, creating novel forms of social dialogue. However, future development may witness emotional manipulation similar to clickbait tactics, with short-form videos increasingly relying on sensationalism to capture attention within time constraints. This bombardment could create psychological imbalance and desensitization, ultimately deepening social 隔阂.

Professor Yu proposed that any technology’s value should be measured by a human-centered standard: whether it expands human freedom, enriches social connections, enhances autonomous rights, and increases social mobility. Technologies and communication forms meeting these criteria are revolutionary, valuable, and worthy of promotion. This humanistic framework allows us to see beyond superficial phenomena to more essential and profound dimensions.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Li Peng

Li Peng, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Sichuan Daily Press Group, President of West China Metropolis Daily, and Chairman and CEO of Cover Media, presented on “Seeing the Big in the Small: The ‘One-Two-Three’ Transformation of Short-Form Video.”

Li Peng identified short-form video as a major new opportunity. Data shows

that Weibo alone publishes 320,000 short videos daily, with peak viewership reaching 2.3 billion views and average per capita viewing time of 15.2 minutes. In 2016, over 200 organizations had integrated with the Weibo platform, with these numbers continuing to grow. As a major hub for short-form video in China, Weibo's data from its 2016 V-Influence Summit indicated that growth momentum remains strong. Even Kevin Kelly noted in his December 9 speech in Chengdu that searchable, retrievable short-form video should be a primary focus for future media development.

Li Peng argued that short-form video has entered its golden age, driven by technological infrastructure and rapid mobile internet development. The proliferation of smartphones, explosive growth in 4G users, reduced data costs, and increased UGC production enthusiasm have made social dissemination mainstream. These converging forces make short-form video's rise inevitable.

However, intensifying competition accompanies this trend. Just within Yixia Technology, platforms like "Miaopai," "Xiaokaxiu," and "Yizhibo" have achieved remarkable metrics, with Miaopai and Xiaokaxiu's daily peak viewership exceeding 25 billion and daily uploads surpassing 1.5 million. With capital flooding into the sector, the next unicorn company in the mobile internet era will likely emerge from short-form video.

Characteristics of Short-Form Video

Short-form video is not merely a scaled-down version of traditional video platforms. Its logic differs fundamentally from institutional video production in the mass communication era and PC-era video dissemination. The production and distribution poles have undergone massive transformation, reconstructing the mobile communication ecosystem. Key characteristics include:

1. **Social Dissemination as Dominant Force:** Short-form video's dependence on professional video websites and media institutions has significantly decreased, with social channels becoming mainstream. Both domestic and international practices demonstrate the natural fusion between short-form video and social media. On one hand, short-form video contributes richer, more creative original content and stronger user stickiness, effectively supplementing social platforms. On the other hand, social platforms provide channels for rapid dissemination, enabling quality content to be discovered and spread more easily. As iResearch analysis suggests, while short-form video competition appears to be about click-through rates, the real contest lies in the social experience each platform provides and the reconfiguration of users' social circles.
2. **User-Generated Content as Primary Mode:** Content production has shifted from PGC-dominated models to UGC-led models. For UGC creators, increasingly accessible production tools have democratized video creation. Among the ten most popular short-form video categories, content ranges from mass-appeal genres like comedy, celebrity, influencer, and

emotional content to highly vertical categories like music, food, beauty, and sports—most of which are UGC-produced.

Future Trends

Li Peng identified three major trends for short-form video:

1. **Intelligent Distribution:** From the mobile internet era to the artificial intelligence era, intelligent dissemination represents the first transformation. In an algorithm-driven age, short-form video must inevitably adopt intelligence as its primary distribution method. Even niche, long-tail content can attract stable audiences if precisely targeted. Platforms should optimize operations to ensure users not only have content to watch but see content that genuinely interests them. By refining algorithms, platforms can deliver truly personalized experiences.
2. **IP Development:** Intelligent push mechanisms deliver more short-form videos precisely to users, forming more segmented communities and creating massive IPs. All profit-generating activities can then revolve around these IPs for 360-degree value redevelopment. Short-form video stories can be extended into long-form content series, or offline merchandise can be developed based on the IP itself. Quality IPs can catalyze entire industry chains, making IP discovery and cultivation critical pathways for short-form video industrialization.
3. **E-Commerce Integration:** Weibo data shows that self-media creators earned 11.7 billion yuan on the platform in 2016, with 10.8 billion coming from e-commerce. The highest-earning short-form video entrepreneurs are those with their own brands. Beyond foundational advertising models, e-commerce operations represent a more vital business model for short-form video monetization.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Duan Dejun

Duan Dejun, Senior Director of the Tencent Video Open Platform, focused his presentation on video self-media, noting that the sector has exploded over the past three years. The total number of original PGC creators has already exceeded ten thousand and continues growing. After initial 野蛮 growth, most self-media operations are returning to value-driven models.

Platform, content, and consumption constitute indispensable elements of the video self-media ecosystem. Regarding platforms, the landscape has evolved from early platforms like Tencent Video and Youku to today's diverse array of video platforms, information platforms, and intelligent recommendation platforms all cultivating self-media.

Duan categorized content into three types: informational, entertainment, and vertical. Informational content leans more professional, with strong timeliness and explosive potential. Entertainment content must reach the top tier and achieve IP-ification—for instance, film and entertainment content may develop into web movies or series. Vertical content becomes more segmented, catering to niche audience interests and everyday life. Such content requires more professional production and deep operational cultivation to find its audience and demonstrate value.

Regarding consumption, Duan emphasized that consumption essentially reflects user behavior. An original self-media IP must first acquire traffic, then cultivate fan communities, and finally achieve monetization. If this closed loop can be formed, it may qualify as a true IP. Key evaluation dimensions include: (1) playback data—video view counts, user demographics, and behavioral analytics; (2) stickiness—user interactions like comments, shares, and likes, including viewing duration and completion rates; (3) market positioning—gaining first-mover advantage in vertical fields during the mobile internet era; and (4) monetization methods—platform advertising revenue sharing, branded content integration, user payments, and other value-added services.

Duan identified four trends for video self-media: socialization, personalization, verticalization, and multi-platform distribution. Technological advances enable personalized recommendations and multi-scenario consumption, creating opportunities for more niche vertical content.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Guo Quanzhong

Guo Quanzhong, Senior Economist at the Department of Social and Cultural Teaching and Research at the National Academy of Governance, presented on “Six Keywords in Short-Form Video Development.”

The first keyword is **explosion**. Short-form video has become a major trend, entering what can be called the short-form video era, driven by several factors: (1) China’s massive internet user base—710 million total internet users and 656 million mobile internet users as of June 2016—provides a solid foundation; (2) large-scale 4G commercialization significantly improves video streaming smoothness, enhancing user experience compared to the 3G era; (3) distribution platforms vigorously support short-form video development, with both Tencent and Toutiao investing heavily; and (4) shifting advertiser demand, with brands increasingly seeking short-form video opportunities for native advertising.

The second keyword is **content entrepreneurs**, representing a springtime for media professionals. Numerous outstanding traditional media practitioners have launched ventures, many entering the short-form video sector and providing tremendous momentum. Their professional expertise has rapidly accelerated short-form video development.

The third keyword is **symbiosis**, describing the dance between platforms and products. Short-form video development requires platforms to scale continuously while maintaining symbiotic relationships with products to mutual benefit. Current platforms include distribution giants like Tencent (WeChat, 朋友圈, QQ, UGC+PGC+self-produced content), Sina Weibo, and Toutiao's personalized recommendations, as well as product-specific platforms like Meipai, Miaopai, and Kuaishou. Successful product-oriented video enterprises require four capabilities: (1) quality short-form video production and storytelling ability; (2) cost control—video production costs are high, and poor cost management leads to losses; (3) new media operation capabilities to effectively manage channels and build fan bases; and (4) business development capacity to establish connections with advertisers.

The fourth keyword is **diversification**, referring to business model categories: (1) short-form video production models like Ergeng; (2) advertising models; (3) e-commerce models; and (4) integrated models combining multiple approaches.

The fifth keyword is **capital**, the nuclear fuel for short-form video development. As a capital-intensive field with high barriers to entry, short-form video relies heavily on capital propulsion, which has consistently favored the sector, particularly from last year to the present.

Finally, Guo predicted that 2017 would mark the beginning of a consolidation era for short-form video, driven by capital as major platforms begin acquiring and integrating smaller players. This consolidation will lead to a survival-of-the-fittest scenario where differentiation precedes integration.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Professor Hu Zhifeng

Hu Zhifeng, Dean of the College of Arts and Media at Beijing Normal University, provided a deep analysis of short-form video's developmental logic by tracing the historical trajectory of media arts.

Media arts, as Hu defined, refers to emerging artistic forms born after the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, characterized by technological, medial, and mass participatory qualities. Technological quality refers to the creation of technical means independent of the human body—beginning with cameras that replaced human eyes and hands in observing and depicting the world, followed by film, radio, television, and extending to today's computer arts and mobile audiovisual forms. While traditional arts like music, fine arts, theater, architecture, and sculpture exhibit uniqueness, elitism, and classicism, new media arts, shaped by technology, mediality, and mass participation, demonstrate replicability, diversity, infinite extensibility, and popularity—fundamentally transforming artistic order.

According to Hu, traditional media arts have evolved through three stages: the game stage, the record stage, and the art stage. Early cinema, for instance,

began as a “variety show” or “Western mirror” phase—a game state fulfilling commercial entertainment functions. Soon, film discovered its ability to record social life, expanding its documentary function and producing works like *Factory Gate* and *Nanook of the North*. As cinema developed, it gradually formed unique discourse and narrative modes—early montage and long-shot techniques—that greatly enhanced its artistic expression. Through these cinematic languages, film created new forms unseen in everyday life, significantly expanding human audiovisual capabilities in the 20th century and opening vast aesthetic spaces. Thus, from the perspective of traditional media arts development, the trajectory moves from commercial entertainment to social documentation to aesthetic cultural functions, cycling and evolving into increasingly advanced forms. Television followed a similar pattern.

Extending this logic to short-form video as an emerging media art form, Hu argued it should follow a parallel trajectory: from primary game states to intermediate record states to advanced artistic states, with corresponding functions evolving from commercial entertainment to social documentation to aesthetic cultural realization.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Xu Yilong

Xu Yilong, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Toutiao, explained why the platform committed to short-form video distribution, a move that sparked widespread discussion when CEO Zhang Yiming announced a 1 billion yuan subsidy for creators in September 2016.

Xu argued that the short-form video era represents not a new trend but a return to visual communication’s fundamental nature. From a mass communication perspective, the evolution appears to move from text to images to video, but from the perspective of human information acquisition, vision has always been primary. Therefore, short-form video’s rise is not novel but rather a restoration of this innate human preference.

Defining Short-Form Video

Based on Toutiao’s data, 93% of short-form videos are under 10 minutes, and 74% are under 5 minutes. Entertainment, music, and comedy constitute the largest categories, benefiting from their ease of production and dissemination. However, diverse other categories also thrive. Notably, over half of Toutiao’s daily readership comes from short-form video.

Xu identified a clear trend toward video-based information dissemination, with information flowing through three stages: production, distribution, and consumption.

Production Evolution

Video production has evolved through three eras: (1) The 1.0 era featured limited production by film and television institutions creating polished content; (2) The 2.0 internet era saw portals and vertical video sites like Youku and Tudou producing self-made content; (3) The 3.0 mobile internet era is dominated by small studios, independent journalists, and ordinary users producing the majority of content.

Consumption and Distribution Transformations

Consumption patterns have similarly transformed. The 1.0 era required viewing at fixed times and locations (cinemas, scheduled television). The 2.0 era introduced on-demand viewing via platforms like iQiyi and Youku. The 3.0 mobile era enables viewing anytime, anywhere—even while walking or riding the subway.

Distribution has also fundamentally changed. While the 1.0 and 2.0 eras relied on professional or commercial perspectives for distribution, the 3.0 era's massive content volume rendered traditional methods ineffective. This created enormous opportunities for platforms like Toutiao that excel at distribution.

Short-form video distribution occurs through two primary channels: social distribution (WeChat, Weibo) and intelligent distribution. While social distribution works through fan networks, its effectiveness plateaus as acquisition costs rise. Intelligent distribution uses machine learning to understand both video content and user preferences, enabling robotic distribution at scale.

For Toutiao, short-form video content divides into two categories: (1) immersive digital entertainment (films, television) consumed for pleasure, and (2) video-based information where users seek the information itself. In the current explosion of short-form video, the latter category predominates.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Liu Tao

Liu Tao, Video Director at Yidian Zixun, analyzed video transformation in the media convergence era from a user demand perspective.

User Demand Hierarchy

Liu identified five hierarchical levels of user demand: (1) killing time, (2) acquiring information, (3) professional learning, (4) social needs, and (5) self-fulfillment. The first two levels have traditionally dominated portal short-form video. Professional learning encompasses practical life skills like cooking techniques. Social needs involve finding interest communities through sharing, which is why many social platforms have integrated short-form video to enhance user

stickiness. Self-fulfillment comes from receiving likes and shares on personal posts—a need that short-form video particularly satisfies.

User demands have shifted dramatically alongside China's internet landscape. By the end of 2015, 90.1% of Chinese internet users had migrated from PC to mobile, transforming consumption patterns from fixed, complete time slots to fragmented, flexible ones.

Platform Adaptation and Distribution Logic

In response, Yidian Zixun categorizes content into three types: newsworthy (substantive revelations), entertaining (curiosity and humor), and practical (such as recipes). These three categories represent key focus areas for short-form video.

Liu emphasized two critical keywords in distribution logic: **artificial** and **intelligent**. Pure algorithmic interest-based distribution can fail to identify fake news, while purely manual distribution cannot effectively profile users for personalized recommendations. The optimal approach combines manual tagging of video content with algorithmic matching to user profiles.

The intelligent recommendation framework operates on four dimensions: hotspot (trending news), interest (matching user preferences through hybrid human-machine tagging), region (localizing content), and exploration (testing diverse content areas to discover evolving user interests through engagement metrics).

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, Liu asserted that **quality content remains the fundamental driver for attracting users** to short-form video platforms.

[FIGURE:N]

Keynote: Professor Zhang Hongzhong

Zhang Hongzhong, Vice Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication at Beijing Normal University, examined short-form video development from a communication studies perspective, identifying two major challenges.

The Selection Problem

The first challenge is user selection. Approximately a decade ago, micro-films represented a similar product form. Based on the internet's unlimited space, anyone could create films with DV cameras. Capital quickly followed, but advertising failed to generate returns primarily due to the selection dilemma. On PC platforms, viewers faced overwhelming video volumes without effective filtering mechanisms, causing micro-films to fade. The missing element was a structural curation system.

Today's short-form video resurgence is enabled by platforms like Toutiao and Yidian Zixun that use algorithms to create distribution mechanisms, breaking micro-films' developmental curse. Users can now access content matching their interests within limited timeframes, solving the distribution challenge. As Netflix CEO Reed Hastings noted, the company knows who watches what, on which devices, and for how long, using this data to recommend programs—essentially creating a personalized channel for each user. This “thousand faces for thousand users” approach resolves the single-recommendation limitation of PC-era platforms, representing the most crucial technical foundation for short-form video's rise.

The Stickiness Problem

While algorithms solve distribution, they introduce a new challenge: user stickiness. Live streaming offers companionship, WeChat provides community, and Weibo has influencers, but short-form video maintains relatively weak user stickiness. The primary issue is time cost. Reading 300-600 words of text per minute allows rapid information processing, whereas video requires sequential clicking and evaluation, making time cost a significant barrier to maintaining user engagement.

Zhang noted that while algorithms solve selection problems—a major breakthrough—short-form video's dissemination mechanisms will continue evolving under technological drivers. As a new media product, short-form video represents a post-structuralist paradigm that prioritizes the pleasurable process of language itself over semantic meaning. This marks a new stage in mass cultural production where audiences seek linguistic pleasure rather than informational content, fundamentally altering media consumption patterns.

[FIGURE:N]

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

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