

## Postprint: Research on the Communication of Aesthetic Culture in Short Videos in the Context of Media Convergence

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to investigate the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of short videos within the context of media convergence, as well as their facilitating role in the integration of traditional and emerging media, thereby providing theoretical support for the healthy development of short video communication. **Method:** This study employs literature analysis to systematically summarize the aesthetic and cultural features of short videos, identify existing issues, and explore optimization strategies. **Results:** As a novel form of content production, short videos deliver visual and emotional experiences fundamentally distinct from traditional media communication modes, yet they are accompanied by corresponding communication risks. **Conclusion:** In the context of media convergence, enhanced emotional and content guidance of short videos by mainstream media will foster the healthy and sustainable development of this emerging communication form.

### Full Text

## Research on the Dissemination of Aesthetic Culture in Short Videos Under Media Convergence

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### Abstract

**[Objective]** This paper aims to explore the aesthetic cultural characteristics of short videos in the context of media convergence and their role in promoting the integration of traditional and emerging media, thereby providing theoretical

support for the healthy development of short video dissemination. **[Method]** Through literature analysis, this study examines the aesthetic cultural features of short videos, identifies existing problems, and discusses optimization strategies. **[Results]** As a novel form of content production, short videos present visual and emotional experiences fundamentally different from traditional media dissemination methods, yet they are accompanied by corresponding communication risks. **[Conclusion]** In the context of media convergence, enhanced guidance by mainstream media regarding the emotional and content dimensions of short videos will contribute to the healthy and sustainable development of this emerging communication form.

**Keywords:** short videos; media convergence; aesthetic culture; dissemination; media

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Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has attached great importance to the integrated development of traditional and emerging media [1]. Short videos have emerged as a new form of content production, becoming a significant force driving the integration of traditional media and digital platforms. In 2013, a series of short video applications were launched successively, diversifying the short video market. Despite technical limitations such as bandwidth constraints and video dimensions, their penetration rate remained astonishing. Douyin, a music creative short video social platform launched in 2016, combined 15-second short videos with music, supported by precise recommendation algorithms and robust operational strategies, including celebrity-driven traffic attraction [3]. This approach enabled Douyin to rapidly achieve high user stickiness in first- and second-tier cities, establishing itself as a leading platform in the short video domain. In 2019, WeChat also entered the short video competition by launching its short video function, consolidating its leading position in the social media market and further promoting the socialization and normalization of short videos. This evolution demonstrates that short videos have transitioned from initial video sharing to social interaction, then to personalized recommendations and cross-platform development. As technology advances and user demands continuously change, short videos have not only transformed traditional media dissemination methods but have also profoundly influenced modern social culture and digital marketing, becoming an indispensable communication medium.

## 1. The Development History of Short Videos

Short videos represent a media form fundamentally different from traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers. They refer to video content of relatively short duration published and disseminated through online platforms. Their dissemination format, content creation methods, and interactivity have made them an important medium for modern information transmission. The development history of short videos can be summarized through several landmark events. The origins of short videos can be traced back to 2005 when YouTube, the world's first large-scale video sharing platform, officially launched with the slogan "Broadcast Yourself" [2], encouraging users to upload and share short clips or original videos. YouTube's launch quickly attracted a massive user base, making it the world's largest video sharing platform. With the rise of social media, platforms such as Twitter and Facebook also 顺应 (adapted to) this emerging trend by launching short video sharing functions to enhance user activity and interactivity. Short videos gradually integrated into modern social life as a new communication method, becoming an important form for daily communication and information sharing.

Domestic short video development entered a rapid growth phase after 2011. In 2011, the Kuaishou App officially launched, initially focusing on GIF creation tools. The following year, Kuaishou evolved into a short video platform, targeting third- and fourth-tier cities and rural areas, successfully accumulating a large volume of "grassroots user" traffic and laying the foundation for the popularization of short video platforms. Thus, short videos have experienced a development trajectory from initial video sharing to social interaction, then to personalized recommendations and cross-platform expansion. As technology progresses and user needs evolve, short videos have not only changed traditional media dissemination patterns but have also profoundly impacted modern social culture and digital marketing landscapes, establishing themselves as a significant communication medium that cannot be ignored.

## 2. Formation Reasons for Short Video Aesthetic Culture Under Media Convergence

The formation of short video aesthetic culture is a complex process involving multiple interwoven factors, including technological advancement, changing social demands, platform evolution, and the transformation of cultural dissemination models. As a novel communication form, the development of short video aesthetic culture exhibits distinct contemporary characteristics and dynamic features compared to traditional media aesthetic culture.

### 2.1 Technical and Platform Support

Short video content production and dissemination primarily rely on mobile smart terminals (such as smartphones) and high-speed internet technology. The 普及 (popularization) of mobile devices has made content creation both more

professional and more democratized—a single smartphone can enable content planning, production, and dissemination, allowing virtually anyone to become a content creator. Simultaneously, applications based on high-speed networks enable rapid uploading, sharing, and dissemination of short videos, significantly lowering the threshold for content creation and providing fundamental support for the formation of short video aesthetic culture. Short video platforms offer user-friendly editing tools and powerful video processing capabilities, enabling ordinary users to easily produce and publish videos. Compared to the centralized production mechanisms of traditional media, short video platforms promote decentralization in content creation, allowing everyone to create distinctive video content based on their interests and creativity. This further drives the diversification and personalization of short video aesthetic culture, enabling specific aesthetic trends and popular elements to spread rapidly.

## 2.2 Mainstream Media' s Application of Short Videos

With the convening of the National Two Sessions in 2022, major mainstream media platforms in China increased their investment in short video news and information propaganda, ensuring that all departments involved in short video product production could enhance their 重视 (attention) and that journalists could improve their awareness [4]. They avoided blind imitation and instead strengthened media integration from the perspective of mobile content production needs. This continuous advancement has demonstrated stronger verticalization and contextualization characteristics. This trend not only drives the continuous expansion of mainstream media short videos in segmented fields but also maintains an overall stable and positive development momentum. Meanwhile, diversified content innovation and extensive application of new technologies have further enhanced the dissemination efficiency and promotional effectiveness of short video news. Through immersive scene display, real-time reporting, and intelligent recommendation technologies, short videos strengthen audience engagement and immersion, bringing greater influence and coverage to information dissemination and becoming an important component of mainstream media reporting formats.

## 2.3 The Driving Force of “Internet Celebrities”

The rapid rise of short video platforms has spawned numerous “internet celebrity” phenomena. Compared with ordinary users, internet celebrities are not only content consumers but also professional content creators on short video platforms. They typically possess strong appeal, excel at capturing trending topics, and quickly generate content with broad dissemination potential. This phenomenon has created a positive cycle in short video production and dissemination: internet celebrities continuously attract user attention through content creation, while user feedback and preferences further drive the development and popularization of short video aesthetic culture.

### 3. Characteristics of Short Video Aesthetic Culture

#### 3.1 Fragmentation

The advancement of modernization has broken down original social norms and the uniformity of market environments, leading to divisions and fragmentation among different groups. Various social groups have developed their own distinct needs and demands, and their perspectives have become increasingly diversified. Society has fragmented into different interest groups, and this social segmentation has brought about differences in interests and cultural demands, forming a “fragmented” society [5]. Cultural dissemination fragmentation originates from social fragmentation. Short videos, as a communication medium, represent a typical manifestation of social fragmentation characteristics. This communication form cuts originally continuous and systematic cultural expressions into independent, scattered fragments through rapid and concise information presentation, filling them into the 零碎 (fragmented) time and attention gaps in human daily life in a more refined content form. Consequently, the “micro-aesthetic” [6] characteristics displayed by short videos have emerged precisely against this background of information overload.

Aesthetic fragmentation manifests in both temporal and spatial dimensions. In the temporal dimension, short videos are characterized by brief duration and concise information, typically expressing core content within seconds to minutes. In the spatial dimension, short videos as aesthetic carriers of the mobile media era are not confined to specific spaces; their aesthetic expectations and satisfactions are completed instantly—for instance, one can finish watching a short video while riding an elevator. This fragmentation permeates all aspects of people’s lives, increasingly occupying an important position.

#### 3.2 Circularity (圈层化)

Peter Blau proposed the “proximity” theory to explain circularity, stating that “people in similar social positions share common social experiences and roles, as well as similar attributes and attitudes, all of which promote social interaction among them” [5]. Compared with people whose social positions differ greatly, interactions between those with similar social positions are more common. In the spiritual domain, circularity manifests as shared aesthetic cognition and taste, thus forming a community that shares aesthetic concepts. Circularity in dissemination is primarily reflected in social media information transmission, especially on short video platforms where there is high overlap between user groups and platform users. Therefore, short video dissemination can no longer be considered independently of the social communication context; its influence is inevitably constrained by social network structures. Within the same level or similar circles, short videos can achieve efficient information diffusion and interactive feedback due to similar needs and interests among these groups, rapidly forming broad dissemination effects. However, short videos based on aesthetic and cognitive interests can only involve distribution mechanisms within

these circles; they struggle to break through social circle barriers and reach broader audiences. Only those short videos capable of transcending different circles can trigger strong responses in wider social networks.

It should be noted that this circularity differs from hierarchical differentiation in offline real society, namely social class. Its main manifestation is the power of information influence and discourse hierarchy. French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that discourse, as a symbolic existence, is the core element of power relations operation: “Discourse is composed of signs, but what discourse forms is not merely using these signs to refer to things. It is this ‘more’ (plus) that makes things irreducible to language and speech” [7]. The circularity characteristics of short videos centrally reflect the hierarchical order and derived power behind discourse. In the internet environment, people are isolated from diverse information due to algorithmic push, encountering only personalized content—a cognitive limitation phenomenon described as “the communications universe that we are listening to and watching we are hearing and seeing only what we choose” [11]. In the modern media environment, short videos have become an important form of mass cultural consumption due to their simplicity, intuitiveness, and rapid dissemination. However, this communication form, while continuously shaping individual aesthetic behavior, also exerts profound influence on public taste, political attitudes, and social cultural ecology, gradually constructing an “aesthetic cocoon.”

### 3.3 Superficiality

The most significant characteristic of postmodern culture is “a new kind of flat and depthless feeling” [8], one manifestation of which is the aesthetics of short video imagery. Due to their small content volume, fragmented format, and flattened meaning, short videos represent one of the representative products of postmodern culture. Short video production concentrates a large amount of everyday aesthetic experience. While “the aestheticization of everyday life” [9]—where daily life moves closer to aesthetics and art, and art gradually enters life—is not inherently negative, it is accompanied by massive replication of life phenomena. When facts are tailored by individual experience, the content becomes a passive extension of aesthetic perception rather than a positive intervention of public thinking in life, diluting deep aesthetic meaning. This constitutes a singular superficial relationship between creators and videos. In terms of aesthetic experience, short videos utilize simulation techniques; the replicated images can satisfy desires through realistic illusions in a short time but lose deep thinking and lasting pleasure. Moreover, the information expressed in short videos is not a continuous information flow, and the audience’s experience is compressed into a process highly dependent on immediate stimulation, resulting in flattened aesthetic experiences.

## 4. Challenges Facing Short Video Aesthetic Culture Dissemination

### 4.2 Privatization and the “Aesthetic Cocoon”

The “aesthetic cocoon” phenomenon in short videos stems from the disruption of intermediality in traditional aesthetic practices by the internet and digital technologies. In this context, aesthetic practice is continuously weakened, critical distance subsequently dissolves, and the role of cultural publicness in the aesthetic domain gradually declines [12]. Public taste thus becomes increasingly privatized, and this privatized, homogeneous aesthetic taste, aided by technical push, creates new cultural isolation phenomena. Public aesthetics centered on shared values and moral goals gradually loses its living space. This “aesthetic cocoon” not only severs exchanges between different cultures but also continuously reduces audience tolerance for diverse art forms. This indicates that the “aesthetic cocoon” phenomenon is not merely an individualization trend in aesthetic choice but more profoundly affects the social cultural ecology, causing it to gradually deviate from public value systems and endangering cultural diversity and social cohesion.

### 4.3 Fragmentation and Misinterpretation in Cultural Dissemination

Modern media has become an invisible barrier connecting spiritual activities and the public. During short video playback, various intuitive images and visuals impact our retinas at high speed and in continuous succession, while the brain seems to become a passive receiver, absorbing these images and information unimpeded without undergoing complex cognitive processing or logical transformation. Information transmission shifts from a process requiring subjective cognitive participation to a direct relationship between objects—that is, the immediate supply of pleasure, desire, and satisfaction. In this communication mechanism, short videos no longer serve as media that trigger thinking but instead directly trigger audience emotional responses and sensory pleasure through extremely simplified visual symbols, emphasizing rapid sensory stimulation and immediate feedback rather than deep thinking or long-term emotional 沉淀 (sedimentation). The subjectivity originally inherent in imagery gradually disappears, replaced by an “empty field” state—viewers only obtain 瞬时 (instantaneous) pleasure from direct visual impact, lacking deep cognitive participation and emotional 沉淀 (sedimentation). Images degenerate from carriers of narrative and thought into pure visual intuition, with pleasure becoming their ultimate consumption purpose [10]. In this situation, short videos are no longer media that narrate or express certain ideas but simplify the viewing experience into immediately satisfying audio-visual supply, further immersing viewers in pure sensory stimulation.

Modern media also has a common effect: “they enlarge the range of reception but narrow the range of publication” [13]. Large audiences can receive information but cannot judge its authenticity or make credible comments. To gain

traffic, short videos often strive for novelty and exaggeration during dissemination, which can fragment originally coherent cultural backgrounds. Complex cultural symbols are interpreted as simple visual elements, causing their deep meanings to be ignored or distorted and preventing accurate transmission of cultural connotations and information. For example, certain folk rituals or cultural symbols are presented in an entertaining manner in short videos, even 脱离 (detached) from their original historical and contextual backgrounds, becoming “exotic” or “labeled” symbols. This treatment easily leads to audience misunderstanding, weakening the authenticity and diversity of cultural exchange. Due to differences in recipients’ horizons of expectation, cultural backgrounds, and cognition, cultural information receives different interpretations, causing original intentions and values to be misunderstood or distorted—a phenomenon particularly evident in short video dissemination. In excessive participation and over-dissemination, everyone’s perceptual capabilities are questioned, and misinterpreted content and viewpoints spread further, deepening cultural 隔阂 (gaps) and hindering deep understanding and resonance between different cultures.

## 5. Optimization Strategies for Short Video Aesthetic Culture Dissemination

Emotion is indispensable in aesthetic activities. In the information age, short videos, as a rapid and intuitive communication form, can quickly 触动 (touch) audience emotions and form strong emotional connections. Mainstream media utilizes this characteristic not only to transmit information but also to establish resonance at the emotional level. In terms of content, by selecting topics with universality and commonality, mainstream media can 推动 (push) short video visual dissemination from 泛娱乐化 (pan-entertainment) to vertical deepening, awakening deep emotional connections within viewers. However, for negative emotions entering the aesthetic culture category, such as violence and “sang” culture (a nihilistic subculture), traditional media should leverage its official channel advantages to strengthen positive guidance, block negative emotions, and form a positive emotional resonance atmosphere to promote healthy and 良性 (benign) development of short videos.

### 5.2 Improving Content Quality and Focusing on Audience Needs in Media Convergence

“Reality is deeply influenced by media” [14]. As a lightweight, mobile, and fragmented information dissemination carrier, short videos highly align with public media usage habits and information reception needs, becoming a common form of information presentation and acquisition. As an effective tool for cross-platform dissemination, short videos can complement traditional media, social media, and emerging platforms, not only broadening video audience groups but also enhancing content diversity and breadth. This integration improves overall content quality and thereby obtains broader expressive space.

Mainstream media-produced short videos 面向 (face) the public, and public acceptance is an important standard for measuring short video quality. When innovating short video content, staff should go 深入 (deep) into grassroots communities, investigate public opinions on mainstream media short videos, connect with people's lives, adjust short video content, and understand people's interests and hobbies. Good news pursues humanistic care and takes "people as ends" as its ultimate goal [15], so video production must possess this core competitiveness. Additionally, platforms should optimize recommendation algorithms by incorporating diversified perspectives into algorithmic recommendations, actively pushing high-quality content from different fields to help viewers broaden their aesthetic horizons and reduce aesthetic 封闭 (enclosure).

Both traditional and new media share the same underlying operational logic and business models. Therefore, traditional media can leverage its advantages in resources and experience to establish sponsor databases and short video account operation teams, find sponsors that align with account content positioning, achieve precise placement to 锁定 (lock in) audiences, and thereby form a virtuous cycle. Utilizing the integrated form of short videos that combines "collection, editing, and dissemination," they can break through news agencies' reliance on text and images as information carriers. Through this dynamic media carrier, their application in news reporting actively promotes the 大趋势 (major trend) of media convergence in the new media era, "achieving all-media production and all-medium dissemination" [16].

### 5.3 The "Singularity" Construction Strategy for Short Videos

Dufrenne pointed out that the depth of an aesthetic object is not equivalent to distance in time or space, nor does it depend on some kind of concealment. Its important 标志 (sign) is "singularity." "When an aesthetic object cannot make us feel 惊奇 (surprised), cannot make us enter a new world, we cannot completely regard it as an aesthetic object. For us, it is still only like a practical object" [17]. Only when the object makes us feel 惊奇 (surprised) and brings us into a new world can it be considered to have depth. For practical objects or everyday life states, the sense of 惊奇 (surprise) is arbitrary or accidental, but for aesthetic objects, it seems to be necessary.

Due to their duration and compact content, short videos often create "singularity" effects through visual impact, plot twists, and highly creative visual language, quickly 剥离 (stripping) viewers from familiar contexts of daily life and entering an "aesthetic moment" rich in freshness and strangeness. It is in the creation of this singularity that short videos transform ordinary life scenes and daily fragments through editing, special effects, and narrative innovation, attracting audiences to generate empathy and constructing a brief yet fulfilling aesthetic depth. Therefore, as a new visual media form, short videos need to explore more diverse expressive paths within singularity to achieve organic integration of aesthetic depth and social value.

In the new era context of media convergence, short videos demonstrate the value of “uniqueness”—highlighting individual subtle emotional experiences and unique memory experiences through personalized expression. This “uniqueness” is not only a reflection of content differentiation but also the fundamental premise of creation. As Kant pointed out, scientific “determinative judgment” is “subsuming the particular under the universal,” while reflective judgment “seeks the universal from the particular” [18], which is also Kant’s basic orientation. Short videos precisely need to follow this reflective judgment path, seeking new paradigms of aesthetic culture from unique perspectives and fragments, allowing viewers to perceive the richness of humanity and life in brief segments, thereby completing emotional triggering and ideological 沉淀 (sedimentation). This unique narrative power is precisely why short videos have become carriers of aesthetic innovation in the new era.

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