

The Impact of Short-Form Video Platform Content Marketing on Consumer Behavior and Strategic Research

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Abstract. This article examines the impact of content marketing on consumer behavior within short-form video platforms (SFVPs) in the digital era and explores how content creators can enhance their competitiveness. It analyzes the current marketing landscape of mainstream SFVPs (e.g., Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu), highlighting their differentiated characteristics in user profiling, content ecosystems, distribution logic, and commercialization pathways. It also details platform-specific formal features such as content fragmentation, vertical screen format, strong visual impact, and high interactivity. Concurrently, the study identifies challenges including content homogenization, supply oversaturation, and singular monetization models, alongside opportunities presented by AI and VR technologies. Factors influencing consumer behavior encompass content quality, content creator influence, and platform interactivity. Based on insights into consumer behavior, strategic recommendations include enhancing content creation quality, precisely targeting audiences, and strengthening collaboration with creators and users.

Keywords: Content Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Short-Form Video Platforms

1. Introduction

The digital era has witnessed the rapid rise of short-form video platforms (SFVPs). According to the latest China Online Audiovisual Development Research Report (2025), China's SFVP user base reached 1.04 billion by the end of 2024. On average, 7 out of every 10 Chinese individuals engage with short videos. Daily usage per capita averages 156 minutes, meaning individuals spend approximately 2.6 hours daily consuming short videos [1]. Consequently, SFVPs play a pivotal role in information dissemination, making content marketing a crucial strategy for businesses and creators to attract consumers. Content marketing effectively influences user emotions, fostering intimate emotional connections and strengthening relationships between users and brands. This research aims to underscore the positive role of SFVP marketing development in facilitating consumer-business interactions, both theoretically and practically.

The relevant theoretical frameworks for this research include Content Marketing Theory and Consumer Behavior Theories—the latter encompasses sub-theories such as the Purchase Decision-Making Theory and the theory of Key Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior.

2. Analysis of the current state of content marketing on short-form video platforms

According to Joe Pulizzi, the "Godfather of Content Marketing" in the US, content marketing is defined as a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action [2].

2.1. Current state analysis of mainstream SFVPs

Short-form video, a quintessential content format of the mobile internet era, refers to video content specifically adapted for dissemination on new media platforms, catering to users' mobile and fragmented leisure needs, and reliant on high-frequency push mechanisms. Currently, platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu, and WeChat Channels constitute the mainstream SFVP matrix, exhibiting significant differentiation in user profiling, content ecosystems, distribution logic, and commercialization pathways.

Platform Positioning & User Attributes: Core platforms exhibit distinct development focuses and user demographics. Douyin (launched as "A.me" in September 2016, renamed "Douyin" in December 2016) positions itself as a creative short-video social platform. Its user base is characterized by trend-seeking behavior, strong interaction willingness, high consumption potential, and a reliance on entertainment-focused content, forming a distinct young and entertainment-oriented profile. Kuaishou, founded earlier in November 2012, primarily covers users in lower-tier cities (third- and fourth-tier) and rural areas, with a higher concentration in northern China. Its content typically features authentic and down-to-earth recordings of rural life, emphasizing strong social attributes and focusing on "livestream commerce" as its core commercial objective, building strong user connections within the lower-tier market. Xiaohongshu (launched in 2013) has a core user base predominantly female, focusing on consumption decision-making scenarios, forming a "content-interest-consumption" closed-loop ecosystem. User attention and conversion willingness for content in vertical domains like beauty and maternal & childcare are significantly high.

Content Ecosystem & Marketing Model Differentiation: Douyin's content marketing exhibits diversification, summarized into six main types: (i) Product seeding, targeting user pain points and highlighting functional value; (ii) Talent showcases, leveraging strong visual impact for entertainment; (iii) Skill tutorials, enhancing user stickiness through practical value; (iv) Entrepreneurial documentaries, triggering emotional resonance through authentic narratives; (v) Lifestyle Vlogs, increasing relatability through everyday scenarios; (vi) Knowledge popularization, disseminating knowledge via "professional content + accessible expression". In contrast, Kuaishou's content leans towards authentic life documentation, heavily concentrated in third- and fourth-tier cities and rural areas [3], aligning closely with lower-tier market user needs, with tighter integration between social attributes and commerce functions. Xiaohongshu uses "interest-based socializing" as its core link, featuring content with strong seeding attributes and consumption orientation, creating a precise vertical content ecosystem.

Distribution Logic & Commercialization Pathway Differentiation: Regarding content distribution logic, Douyin employs a centralized algorithmic mechanism, prioritizing traffic aggregation and focusing on creating instant viral content (e.g., hashtag challenges) for short-term traffic bursts. Kuaishou integrates social distribution with algorithmic recommendation, emphasizing long-term relationships between creators and users to strengthen private domain traffic value. Xiaohongshu utilizes an "interest + social" recommendation logic, leveraging search functions to drive user consumption decisions, forming a "content search - demand matching -

consumption conversion" funnel. Commercialization efficiency also varies significantly. Douyin, with its mature advertising system and e-commerce infrastructure, boasts the highest monetization efficiency. Kuaishou excels in private domain conversion capabilities within the lower-tier market, with distinct advantages in user trust and repurchase rates. Xiaohongshu offers precise seeding-to-conversion funnels in vertical fields like beauty and maternal & childcare, providing brands with efficient contextualized marketing paths.

User Value & Applicable Scenarios: From a user value perspective, Bilibili (B站) cultivates youth subculture identity, Xiaohongshu targets female consumption decision-making, Douyin serves as a broad-spectrum user entertainment traffic gateway, and Kuaishou builds a community ecosystem based on authentic life. Regarding applicable scenarios, Douyin and Kuaishou are more suitable for brand exposure and short-term conversion, while Xiaohongshu holds advantages in contextualized marketing for vertical fields like beauty and maternal & childcare.

In summary, mainstream SFVPs, based on differentiated user positioning, content ecosystems, and distribution mechanisms, have formed distinct commercial values and application scenarios. This diversified landscape provides rich pathways for innovation and development within the digital content industry.

2.2. Formal characteristics of mainstream SFVPs

Within the current media ecology, content on mainstream SFVPs exhibits prominent fragmentation, a characteristic permeating the entire chain from production to consumption. Core content duration typically ranges from 15 to 60 seconds, fostering a fast-paced narrative mode. This mode aligns highly with users' daily fragmented time slots, reducing time investment costs and cognitive load, thereby making viewing behavior easier to embed into everyday life. Technically, mainstream SFVPs predominantly adopt a vertical screen format. This design optimally fits the physical form of mobile terminals and user holding habits, simplifying the viewing operation process and enhancing ease of use through optimized interface interaction logic. Simultaneously, platform content heavily relies on visual impact strategies, extensively employing special effects, filters, and other technical means to enhance visual appeal, creating potent mechanisms for capturing user attention. From an interactivity dimension, features like liking, commenting, and sharing constitute a comprehensive participation system. This interactivity not only heightens user immersion and sense of agency but also deepens cognitive processing through behavioral feedback mechanisms, significantly improving information recall and thereby solidifying platform user stickiness.

In conclusion, mainstream SFVPs, through the synergistic effects of duration control, format adaptation, visual reinforcement, and interaction design, have constructed a content ecosystem aligned with the logic of fragmented communication. These characteristics and mechanisms offer crucial insights for understanding contemporary media consumption behavior.

2.3. Challenges and opportunities facing mainstream SFVPs

The development of mainstream SFVPs currently faces multiple challenges, with core contradictions manifesting in three dimensions: content production, dissemination ecology, and commercial monetization.

Content Homogenization: While vertical specialization within platform niches has clarified creator positioning (e.g., study-focused bloggers concentrating on daily routines and lists), formulaic content production logic stifles innovation. Such homogenized content often fails to stimulate deep

user engagement, evidenced by low interaction metrics like likes and saves, reflecting a gap between content value and user needs.

Content Oversupply & Rising Filtering Costs: The deep integration of AI technology into video editing, caption generation, and other production stages has drastically lowered technical barriers and exponentially increased output efficiency. This directly leads to an explosion in SFVP volume. The chaotic accumulation of vast information not only increases user filtering costs but also heightens the risk of quality content being diluted.

Singular Monetization Models & Intensified Competition: The primary monetization paths for creators on mainstream SFVPs currently include platform subsidies, fan economy mechanisms, online courses, paid content, and merchandise sales [4]. However, the proliferation of platforms and creators has resulted in the excessive fragmentation of finite user attention and advertising budgets, leading to declining monetization efficiency and industry competition reaching fever pitch.

Concurrently, technological innovation presents structural opportunities for SFVPs:

AI-Driven Precision: The maturation of large AI models enables the evolution of user profiling systems towards greater precision and dynamism. This allows creators to optimize content strategies based on user preference data, achieving better alignment between creation and demand.

Immersive Experiences: The application of AR/VR technologies is reshaping content consumption scenarios. Their ability to break beyond traditional flat-screen viewing empowers users with immersive product experiences and service perceptions, opening new spaces for content innovation and commercial monetization.

The interplay of these challenges and opportunities illuminates the transformation logic of the SFVP industry driven by technology, providing critical perspectives for exploring sustainable development pathways.

3. Analysis of factors influencing consumer behavior via SFVP content marketing

3.1. Factors influencing content quality

A significant positive correlation exists between the quality of user-generated content (UGC) and purchase intention: higher UGC quality correlates with stronger consumer purchase intent. Key factors influencing content quality include:

Information Value: Encompassing authenticity and expertise, completeness and depth, and contextualized presentation.

Audiovisual Technical Quality: Covering visual elements such as resolution, stability, color accuracy, etc., and auditory elements including clarity and volume stability. The concept of "情景交融" (qing jing jiao rong- emotional fusion with scenery) requires creators to embed emotion within the scene when crafting artistic conception; "虚实相生" (xu shi xiang sheng- mutual generation of the tangible and intangible) refers to the interplay between tangible forms (shixiang) and intangible elements (xuxiang) to create meaning, emphasizing the traditional Chinese aesthetic of "reserved space" (天地有大美而不言 - Heaven and Earth possess great beauty but speak not) [5].

Content Creator Capability: Consumers exhibit a preference for creators demonstrating expertise in a specific domain through consistent output, or those possessing higher educational qualifications.

3.2. Factors influencing content creator impact

Several factors shape a creator's influence:

Technological Proficiency: Creators adept at leveraging technological advancements can adapt and innovate efficiently, while those unable to utilize new tools stagnate and produce content less effectively.

Platform Rules & Policies: Creator dissatisfaction with platform revenue-sharing models, particularly high commission rates reducing creator earnings, can significantly dampen creative motivation.

Creator Education Level: Survey data indicates consumers exhibit a preference for creators associated with prestigious educational institutions.

Creator Expression Style: Different consumer segments prefer distinct communication styles (e.g., consumers with lower educational attainment may favor humorous creators).

3.3. Analysis of platform interactivity

Social platforms provide a structured environment for interaction between content creators and consumers, a mechanism that significantly drives content dissemination effectiveness. The underlying logic can be explained through the "Interaction Density - User Participation - Propagation Heat" chain.

Basic Effect of Interaction: The frequency of interaction between creators and users constitutes a core variable. Increased interaction density directly strengthens user emotional bonds and perceived engagement. Critically, it also elevates the initial exposure of content via platform algorithmic traffic allocation mechanisms, forming a primary cycle: Increased Interaction Frequency → Elevated Baseline Visibility.

Demonstration Effect & Collective Mobilization: Interaction behavior exhibits significant demonstration effects and group mobilization characteristics. When users receive responses from creators (e.g., through replies to comments or Q&A), this positive feedback motivates imitation and heightened participation desire among other users, leading to scalable growth in comment volume. Accumulated comments serve not only as direct indicators of user attention but also further amplify content exposure through platform algorithms that prioritize content based on engagement metrics, forming a secondary cycle: Increased User Comments → Enhanced Exposure → Sustained Heat Amplification.

This dynamic mechanism of interaction-propagation reveals the non-linear impact of user participation behavior on content popularity within social platforms, offering a micro-level perspective on content diffusion patterns in the digital age.

4. SFVP content marketing strategies based on consumer behavior insights

4.1. Enhancing content creation quality

Strategies for optimizing SFVP content and enhancing user reach can be implemented across multiple dimensions:

Strengthen Narrative Tension & Creative Expression: Utilize plot reversals to disrupt linear narratives, creating memorable deviations; strategically deploy suspense elements leveraging information gaps to sustain user attention and curiosity, thereby boosting completion rates and propagation potential.

Synergize Visual & Auditory Elements: Enhance visual information delivery through layered subtitle design; employ techniques like slow motion to heighten emotional impact in key scenes;

meticulously match background music to content rhythm and emotional tone, creating a dual sensory stimulus ("visual-auditory") for deeper user immersion.

Deepen User Interaction & Foster Co-Creation: Leverage platform features to design lightweight interactive scenarios (e.g., initiating challenge campaigns to encourage user imitation/creation, or posing open-ended discussion topics to spark dialogue and sharing). Lowering participation barriers transforms passive viewers into active disseminators, expanding content reach through secondary diffusion.

Explore Cross-Brand Collaboration Synergies: Partner with complementary brands, IPs, or creators through co-branding initiatives. This merges diverse audience pools and traffic resources, leveraging differentiated brand associations to expand reach. Innovative collaboration formats enhance content novelty and topic potential, amplifying campaign breakout capabilities.

These strategies form a synergistic approach across content creation, sensory experience, user participation, and resource integration, providing a systematic framework for enhancing SFVP marketing efficacy. The underlying logic also offers practical insights for research on digital content dissemination.

4.2. Precise targeting of the audience

In marketing communications, the "target audience" refers to the specific group an organization or brand precisely aims to reach through its marketing activities. This group shares similar demographic attributes, behavioral patterns, and psychological needs, representing the segment with the highest potential consumption intent for the product or service. Precise identification and targeting offer significant strategic value: significantly improves marketing resource allocation accuracy and conversion efficiency, avoiding waste from irrelevant exposure; optimizes consumer decision paths by aligning with audience needs, directly boosting conversion rates and ROI; builds emotional connections and deepens brand affinity and loyalty through resonant demand fulfillment; establishes differentiation and competitive advantage by precisely meeting niche audience needs in saturated markets; and provides quantifiable audience feedback data for data-driven decision-making and continuous optimization.

Within the SFVP context, practical paths for precise audience targeting include:

Focus on Entertainment & Emotional Needs: Design content to deeply satisfy audience desires for emotional resonance and experiential fulfillment.

Adopt Short Drama-Style Storytelling: Employ plot-driven, narrative expressions to enhance content appeal and information memorability.

Highlight Emotional Value Premium: Translate the emotional value of content into user willingness to pay (e.g., purchases, subscriptions) or share.

Leverage UGC for Virality: Utilize audience-generated content and sharing behaviors to organically expand brand reach.

Apply Interactive Technologies: Enhance user participation and construct immersive marketing scenarios to strengthen audience engagement and retention.

The synergistic application of these pathways provides an actionable framework for achieving precise audience reach and maximizing marketing effectiveness within SFVPs, also contributing valuable perspectives to research on digital marketing innovation.

4.3. Strengthening collaboration with creators and users

Participants in interaction rituals, sharing a common focus and emotional connection, generate a collective emotional experience and sense of identity, prompting the formation of new social roles and images [6].

Build Community-Based Operation Systems: Utilize features like Douyin Groups or Xiaohongshu Groups. Content creators should engage in regular interaction and communication with consumers within these groups.

Foster Brand Co-Creation: Brand co-creation refers to a strategic partnership model where two or more brands collaborate based on shared goals, integrating complementary resources and strengths to jointly create, promote, and maintain a unified brand or brand ecosystem with enhanced value. Its essence lies in overcoming the limitations of individual brands through synergistic effects, achieving brand equity appreciation, market expansion, and elevated user value. Encourage creators and users to participate in brand co-creation initiatives, constructing robust cooperative relationships.

5. Conclusion

In the context of big data, content marketing has become an imperative for the survival and development of content creators. Through in-depth analysis of market dynamics, consumer behavior, and technological trends, it is evident that traditional marketing approaches struggle to cope with the rapid changes and highly personalized demands of the contemporary market. Therefore, content creators must dedicate efforts to refine and deepen their marketing content to navigate the diverse and complex landscape of the video era.

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