Original Paper

Research on Mechanism, Dilemma and Path of Short Video Empowering Rural Revitalization from the Perspective of New Media

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the deep integration of new media and China's rural revitalization strategy, short video platforms are profoundly reshaping the narratives and practical pathways of rural development. This study employs a SWOT analysis to systematically examine the mechanisms and challenges of short video platforms in empowering this transformation. The analysis reveals that the core Strengths of these platforms lie in their decentralized content production model and precise algorithmic distribution. Conversely, their primary Weaknesses include content homogenization and inconsistent quality, driven by a "culture industry" logic that risks creating a stigmatized image of rural areas. Externally, significant Opportunities arise from national strategic support and growing market demand for "nostalgia consumption." However, these are counterbalanced by realistic Threats, such as the value distortion caused by a "traffic-first" mentality and the limitations of algorithmic "echo chambers." Consequently, this paper proposes a systematic optimization path across four dimensions: 1) combining top-level policy design with multi-stakeholder collaborative governance; 2) fostering a dual-drive of talent cultivation and content innovation; 3) promoting cultural empowerment alongside regional brand building; and4) coordinating technological optimization with "short video+" industrial integration. By outlining these paths, this research aims to provide theoretical and practical references for platform governance, policy formulation, and implementation in the context of rural revitalization.

Keywords

rural revitalization, short video platform, SWOT analysis

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of new media technology, short video platform, with its characteristics of low threshold, strong interaction and fast communication, has rapidly penetrated into all levels of social life, and also brought unprecedented opportunities for rural development. With the increase of Internet penetration rate in rural areas, short videos have not only become an important entertainment mode and information source for township residents, but also spawned a brand-new rural narrative and economic form. As scholars such as Yuan Peipei said, short videos have become an important carrier to promote rural revitalization and help the development of rural cultural industries (Yuan, Ma, & Di, 2020). The purpose of this study is to explore the role path, realistic dilemma and future direction of short video platform in the process of helping rural development in the new media era.

2. The Development Status of Rural Short Videos in the New Media Era

At present, rural short videos with the theme of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" are in the ascendant, and their development status presents opportunities and challenges. From the perspective of content production, there are mainly two modes: user-made and specialized production. User-made content, with farmers as the creative subject, truly and vividly shows the rural natural scenery, folk customs and farming culture, greatly enriching the expression of rural image. However, this kind of creation also faces the bottleneck of content convergence and lack of depth. At the same time, platform guidance and professional team production, represented by ByteDance's "Three Rural Partners" program, have improved the professionalism and influence of the content, but how to continuously empower ordinary farmers and avoid the emergence of the digital divide is still a subject to be solved (Wei, 2021).

From the perspective of communication mechanism, the rise of short videos has given farmers unprecedented digital rights. The progress of technology has broken the authoritative pattern of traditional information dissemination, and the simple filming process has transformed farmers from "recipients" of information into "expressors" of culture, and their subjective consciousness has gradually awakened in this process. These image records rooted in rural areas have become vivid carriers reflecting rural mainstream values and cultural characteristics. However, how to effectively transform the huge online traffic into a sustained driving force to promote the development of rural real economy and how to guide content creation from "unregulated growth" to "high-quality development" are the core issues that need to be further studied.

3. SWOT Analysis of Short Video Platform to Help Rural Economic Development

3.1 Strengths

3.1.1 Media Characteristics: Low Threshold and High Adaptability

The core advantage of short video media is that it completely subverts the centralized production paradigm of traditional media, and through its "short, flat and fast" characteristics, it is highly adapted

to the fragmented information consumption situation in the era of mobile Internet. From the production point of view, the popularity of smart phones and the "template" and "one-click" operation of editing software have greatly reduced the technical threshold and economic cost of content production, enabling the vast number of farmers to cross the equipment and skill barriers of the "digital divide" and change from passive recipients of media information to active constructors of rural narratives. The field work, local people's feelings and daily life recorded by them from the first-person perspective show a kind of "original ecology" truth that has not been translated by professional media, which not only effectively dispels the information barrier and cognitive gap between urban and rural areas, but more importantly, it breaks the traditional media's stereotyped presentation of the countryside, and builds a brand-new three-dimensional, pluralistic and dynamic real village for the outside world to observe and understand.

3.1.2 Communication Advantages: Huge User Base and Accurate Algorithm Distribution

With its first-Mover advantage and network effect, the head short video platform, represented by TikTok and Kuaishou, has accumulated a huge user base and formed a huge traffic pool, which provides a broad potential market for the wide dissemination of the content of agriculture, rural areas and farmers (Yu, 2020). A large number of users not only means huge consumption potential, but also provides a rich audience base for the diversified production and subdivided development of content. More crucially, the personalized recommendation algorithm based on user behavior data, interest tags and social relationships can accurately push specific rural content to potential interested users. For example, users who are interested in traditional handicrafts will be recommended the video of "ancient papermaking", while users who care about healthy eating may see the growing process of organic vegetables. This precise distribution mechanism not only greatly improved the communication efficiency, but also spawned countless "interesting communities" around the specific theme of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" in the virtual space. The high sense of trust and emotional stickiness within the communities provided valuable social capital for the subsequent commercial transformation behaviors such as live broadcast of agricultural products, rural tourism promotion, etc., and its transformation efficiency was far from comparable to the traditional widely publicized marketing model.

3.2 Weaknesses

3.2.1 The Dilemma of Content Production: Homogeneity and the Hidden Trouble of "Cultural Industry"

At present, the primary dilemma faced by rural short video creation is the increasingly prominent content homogenization under the guidance of platform traffic logic. In order to avoid risks and pursue rapid success, some creators tend to imitate and copy the narrative framework and expression forms of "explosive models" that have been verified by the market, resulting in a large number of contents that are highly similar in theme, scene, personnel design and even background music, lacking real innovation and regional uniqueness (Wang, 2023). This phenomenon reflects the "culture industry" logic critiqued by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: rural culture is simplified into

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standardized "content products" for mass consumption, which appear diverse but are actually similar in connotation and singular in spiritual core (Li & Chen, 2023). This streamlined production mode will not only dilute the value of high-quality content in the long run, but also lead to the aesthetic fatigue of the audience. More dangerously, it will flatten the colorful rural life into a few exotic or pastoral symbols, which will obscure the complexity and authenticity of rural development.

3.2.2 Content Ecological Chaos: Uneven Quality and Image Stigma

Table 1. High-quality Creators in TikTok

Number	User name	Number of fans	Number of videos	Total likes
1	Peng Nanke	5.1 million	78	26.61 million
2	Li Yichun	5.05 million	13	74.401 million
3	Peng Chuanming	10.58 million	188	62.742 million
4	Shan Bai	7.62 million	33	47.05 million
5	Mai Xiaodeng	16.28 million	1074	310 million

In the open environment of "everyone can create", the content quality of the platform presents serious polarization. It is true that top-quality creators—such as Peng Chuanming, Shan Bai, and Mai Xiaodeng (as shown in Table 1)—have successfully spread the wisdom of farming and traditional handicrafts through excellent image production, in-depth cultural excavation, and sincere emotional input, reshaped the positive and healthy image of "new farmers", and gained great social influence and commercial value (Yang, 2023).

However, a large number of shoddy and low-brow contents have flooded the platforms at the bottom of the pyramid. To stand out from the fierce traffic competition, some creators resort to sensationalism, deliberately reinforcing stereotypes of rural backwardness. They employ performative self-deprecation or exploit poverty narratives (a practice known as "pity-selling") to garner viewership. What's more, they fabricate sad stories to promote products or maliciously shoot videos that exaggerate the dilapidated scenes in the countryside. These behaviors not only stigmatize the dignity and image of farmers but also mislead urban audiences' understanding of the true face of rural revitalization, and even inflict potential and long-term harm on local cultural tourism brands and the credibility of agricultural products. Their negative externalities cannot be ignored.

3.3 Opportunities

3.3.1 Favorable Macro Environment: National Strategy and Digital Infrastructure

Rural revitalization, as the full implementation of the national top-level strategy, provides an unprecedented favorable policy environment and a broad stage of the times for the development of

"three rural" short videos (Shi, 2023). From the central government to the local government, a series of supporting policies aimed at promoting the modernization of agriculture and rural areas have created favorable conditions for the flow of production factors such as talents, capital and technology to the countryside. As one of the strategic directions of rural revitalization, the core of "digital village" construction is to use digital technology to empower rural all-round development. The continuous improvement of communication infrastructure such as 5G network and fiber-optic broadband in rural areas and the gradual bridging of the "digital divide" between urban and rural areas have laid a solid material foundation for the popularization and high-level application of short video in rural areas. The dual drive of policy bonus and technology popularization is pushing rural short video from individual spontaneous entertainment behavior to an organized and targeted strategic tool that serves multiple goals such as rural industry, culture and governance.

3.3.2 Strong market Demand: Homesickness Consumption and Cultural Identity

In the process of fast-paced and high-pressure urbanization, there is a general yearning for rural life and nostalgia for traditional local culture among urban residents, which has spawned a large and growing "homesickness consumption" market. Pastoral content, represented by Li Ziqi's phenomenon, accurately captures and satisfies the deep psychological needs of the audience to seek "spiritual hometown", return to nature and "return to nature" in the post-industrial society, thus arousing a wide range of emotional resonance and cultural identity across circles and borders. This market demand provides a continuous source of traffic and a solid foundation of commercial value for high-quality and in-depth rural short videos. The audience's love for the real, beautiful and healthy rural lifestyle and the demand for consumption upgrading of green and traceable agricultural products together constitute the fundamental market driving force to promote the development of rural short video content in the direction of high quality and branding.

3.4 Threats

3.4.1 Alienation of Business Logic: Flow First and Value Distortion

The embedded commercial attributes of the short video platform naturally make it centered on indicators such as traffic, user duration and commercial realization. Under the control of this logic of "flow first", the value systems of some creators become distorted. The purpose of content creation shifts from sharing life or culture to aggressively pursuing data and commercial interests, often through unethical means. Such chaotic phenomena as "fake fruits" that ripen in violation of the laws of nature, "selling goods with misery" that consume the disadvantaged groups in rural areas, and "self-abuse" eating and broadcasting that endanger physical and mental health are the abnormal products of excessive expansion of business logic and overwhelming the bottom line of social responsibility and ethics. This behavior not only touches the red line of morality and law, but also fundamentally erodes the credibility of the entire content ecology. Once consumers' trust in the platform is shaken, rural e-commerce and cultural tourism industries based on short videos will also face a crisis of drastic measures.

3.4.2 Limitation of Algorithm Technology: Information Cocoons and Communication Barrier

The algorithm recommendation mechanism of the platform is a double-edged sword. While realizing accurate distribution and improving the user experience, it also brings the inherent risk of "information cocoons". The algorithm constructs a closed and circular information environment by continuously recommending the content of its historical preference to users, which may lead to the narrowing of users' horizons and make it difficult for them to access different types or deeper information. For rural short videos, this means that innovative content with high quality and potential for breaking circles may not meet the existing interest labels of some users, so it is difficult to obtain algorithm recommendations, and the communication effect is limited to the inherent circle layer. In addition, the algorithm tends to allocate more traffic to the head accounts that already have a large number of fans, forming the "Matthew effect" of "the stronger the strong, the weaker the weak", which undoubtedly increases the difficulty for new, small and medium-sized creators to break through, which is not conducive to the diversification and innovation vitality of the content ecology in the long run.

4. Path Selection of Short Video Platform to Help Rural Economic Development

4.1 Policy Guidance and Multi-party Cooperation

Facing the complexity of rural short video development, we must build a multi-collaborative governance system involving government, platform, social organizations and individual creators. First of all, the government should play the dual roles of "guide" and "supervisor" and integrate the healthy development of rural short videos into the broader strategic planning for rural revitalization and digital village construction. On the one hand, high-quality content and creative talents are positively encouraged by setting up special support funds, holding regional content competitions and establishing "new farmers" incubation bases. On the other hand, it is necessary to unite with the departments of network information and market supervision to delimit a "negative list" of content creation and severely crack down on illegal activities such as false propaganda and vulgar speculation. Secondly, the platform side must assume the main responsibility, optimize the algorithm recommendation mechanism, and give consideration to social value orientation while pursuing commercial interests, such as setting up an exclusive flow pool for "rural revitalization" to tilt the flow of high-quality content with values such as cultural heritage and promoting agriculture through science and technology. Finally, social forces such as industry associations and village-level collective economic organizations should actively intervene, carry out industry self-discipline, organize skills training, guide creators to form correct values, and form a new pattern of governance in which the government's macro-control, platform technical support, social collaborative supervision and individual self-discipline create a multi-faceted and benign interaction.

4.2 Explore Excellent Video Creators

Talent is the first resource of the content industry, and it is also the key to activate the endogenous development power in rural areas. In order to systematically improve the overall quality of rural short

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videos, it is necessary to build a full-chain talent system from excavation, cultivation to empowerment. At the excavation level, the platform can actively search for potential "amateur" creators through the combination of online recruitment plan and offline township visits. On the cultivation level, professional MCN institutions, returning entrepreneurs, agricultural technology experts and local farmers should be encouraged to cooperate deeply, form creative teams with complementary advantages, and provide systematic training including shooting and editing, operation strategy and brand positioning. At the level of empowerment, the most important thing is to guide the creators to return to the initial creative intention of "content is king" and transcend the primary mode of "food+beauty". We should encourage the content to extend to the deeper cultural core and industrial value chain: first, dig deep into culture, systematically record and spread intangible cultural heritage [8], local operas, traditional festivals, etc. The second is the presentation of industrial value, showing new formats such as modern smart agriculture, intensive processing of agricultural products, and rural e-commerce logistics; The third is the narrative of rural governance, which tells the vivid story of rural cadres, the first resident secretary and grassroots party member leading the masses to struggle together, thus constructing a multi-dimensional and panoramic genealogy of contemporary rural images.

4.3 Cultural Empowerment and Linkage Media

The core competitiveness of short video lies in its strong cultural communication and brand building ability. We should strategically promote rural short videos from scattered product promotion to systematic regional public brand building. Creators should take the unique local history and culture, geographical indications and folk customs as the core, and create a distinctive personal IP and rural brand image through continuous and unified visual symbols and narrative style. Through the infectious image narration, the agricultural products are deeply bound with the ecological environment, ingenious technology and humanistic stories behind them, so as to enhance the cultural added value and brand premium ability of products. At the same time, we must strengthen the construction of cross-media and cross-platform communication matrix, promote the deep cooperation between rural short video creators and mainstream media such as CCTV and provincial satellite TV, participate in the production of large-scale documentaries and cultural variety shows, and realize the mutual endorsement of "grassroots" traffic and "official" authority. In this process, the county media center should play its pivotal role of connecting the preceding with the following, integrate the creative forces in the region, uniformly plan, produce and promote serialized and themed high-quality content, systematically tell the "local story" of rural revitalization in the new era, and create a credible, lovely and respectable new regional image.

4.4 Technology Empowers and Improves Quality

In order to efficiently and sustainably transform huge online traffic into real economic benefits to promote rural development, it is necessary to deepen the technology application and industrial integration. In terms of technology application, creators should be encouraged to actively embrace new technologies, such as using drone aerial photography to show grand rural landscape, using VR/AR

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technology to provide immersive farm experience, and using big data analysis to gain insight into market demand to guide production (C2M mode), so as to continuously enhance the scientific sense and attractiveness of content. In terms of industrial integration, we should vigorously promote the diversified development of "short video+"mode, go beyond the single live broadcast with goods, and explore "short video+rural tourism" (route promotion, hotel reservation), "short video+cultural creativity" (development of intangible derivatives), "short video+education and training" (paid courses for agricultural technology knowledge) and "short video+farming experience" (recognition The platform should provide technical support, such as developing e-commerce tools that are more suitable for agricultural products sales, providing technical solutions for tracing the origin, and continuously optimizing the algorithm. On the basis of personalized recommendation, the platform should explore the establishment of a "public value" recommendation model to ensure that high-quality and diverse rural content can break through the circle restrictions and reach a wider audience, and finally realize the deep empowerment and value reshaping of the whole chain of rural primary, secondary and tertiary industries by digital technology.

5. Conclusion

In the new media era, digital media, represented by short videos, has been deeply embedded in rural social texture, and has become a key variable to deconstruct traditional rural impressions, reshape modern rural images and drive rural economic and social development. It is not only an image window to show the unique charm of rural China, but also a digital bridge to connect urban and rural elements and stimulate endogenous power, which has injected unprecedented technological momentum and communication vitality into the implementation of rural revitalization strategy.

Using the SWOT analysis framework, this study systematically analyzes the internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats in the process of short video platform helping rural development, and profoundly reveals the complex contradictions it faces in content production, ecological governance, business logic and algorithm technology. On this basis, the paper constructs a set of three-dimensional and systematic optimization paths to promote rural short videos from spontaneous growth to high-quality development from four dimensions: top-level design and collaborative governance, talent cultivation and content innovation, cultural empowerment and brand building, and technical optimization and industrial integration.

The core conclusion of the study is that if we want to fully release the great potential of short video to revitalize the countryside, we must realize a profound paradigm shift, that is, from the "flow economy" that simply pursues eyeball effect to the "content economy" and "brand economy" that pays attention to long-term value and social benefits. This transformation cannot be completed by a single subject, but requires all participants, such as the government, the platform, rural creators and the public, to unite their development consensus, adhere to the bottom line of value of innovation, and work together to create a healthy, orderly, pluralistic, inclusive and sustainable content ecology. The future exploration

direction should focus on how to make digital technology truly serve the all-round development of rural areas through system design and technological innovation, and make online traffic truly transform into farmers' actual income and rural cultural self-confidence. The ultimate goal is not only to revitalize the economy, but also to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of rural culture through the deep empowerment of digital media, to stimulate the modernization vitality of rural social governance, and to make a colorful and hopeful new picture of digital countryside unfold truly and vividly on the vast land of China.

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