Impact of Short Video Marketing on Film Promotion: A Case Study of Douyin Platform

Yiyan Zhou[1,a,*]

[1]Department of Journalism & Communication School, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, 201620, China
a. 0211148068@shisu.edu.cn
*corresponding author

Abstract: Short video platforms, with their ease of content production, wide dissemination, and large user base, have become important mediums in the internet, providing new opportunities for film marketing and promotion. This study explores the use and effects of short video platforms (Douyin) in film marketing. Through case analysis and in-depth interviews, short video marketing has significant advantages in disseminating film information, attracting audiences with diverse content forms, and increasing exposure and appeal. However, issues like excessive plot leakage and content homogenization may affect audience expectations and viewing experience. The study also reveals that short video marketing excels in emotional resonance and guiding social topics but should avoid over-reliance on star power and misleading promotions. Based on these findings, the study recommends optimizing short video film marketing strategies, including maintaining content novelty, enhancing emotional marketing, effectively using audiovisual language, and accurately targeting audiences to improve marketing effectiveness and audience engagement.

Keywords: Short Video Marketing, Film Promotion, Douyin Platform, Audience Engagement

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of digital media and the rise of online mass discourse, a new era of small-screen image consumption has ushered in. With the convenience of content production, the wide range of dissemination, and the high coverage of the number of users, short video platforms have become an important type of discourse in the Internet, providing a new scenario for film marketing and publicity. Although many studies have explored short video marketing, most focus on exploring the relationship between short video marketing and audience consumption behavior or carry out case studies for specific films [1, 2]. A review of existing studies reveals a need for more research on specific short video platforms specific short video platforms. Douyin is an important platform for short video communication for film marketing, and many films will open official Douyin accounts and release short video marketing materials. The short video on movie marketing in this article refers to the short video marketing materials published by official accounts related to movies on the Douyin platform. The study selected the Douyin platform for case analysis, combined with in-depth interviews, to explore the strategy of short video marketing.

2.   Literature Review

Short video marketing for movies often focuses on movie clips, audience reactions, shooting footage, etc. In the research on short video marketing, the early research paid more attention to the changes in film marketing in the current digital environment. It focused on online video marketing without strict video length definitions and distinctions. The perceived humor and multimedia effects of online video marketing positively affect users' attitudes toward accepting online videos and their willingness to forward them [3]. Further, movie trailer-sharing behavior positively impacts box office revenue [4], confirming that appropriate online video marketing of movies can stimulate consumers' theatrical consumption behavior.

With the increasingly close cooperation between film marketing companies and short video platforms, more recent attention has focused on short video marketing. Several studies thus far have linked short videos with consumers' theatrical consumption behavior and box office revenue. Research shows a significant and stable positive correlation between the number of short video plays and the box office revenue of movies [5]. The content identity of short videos positively impacts the audience's willingness to consume in theaters, in which the audience's emotional response and psychological distance play a mediating role. Much of the current literature on short video marketing pays particular attention to its strategies and characteristics. Short video applications reflect equal sociality, diversity of creation, and timeliness of communication in film marketing. However, in the early stage of film marketing, short video marketing has the problems of monotonous content, low recognition and investment, and a vague conversion rate [6]. The audience's presence is an important source of the "sociality" of the film, and it is internalized in every aspect of film creation and criticism as a collection of concepts and practices. Influenced by the new media, the audience in the new media era is a user presence with obvious media usage characteristics compared with the traditional concept of audience. Therefore, short video marketing needs to carry out content marketing and emotional marketing and use the movie's content to attract audiences. It is also necessary to cater to the users of the short video platform with the help of the star effect and user-generated content to create a three-dimensional marketing matrix.

The current research on short video marketing mainly focuses on analyzing the characteristics of short video platforms and specific movies and proposing corresponding marketing strategies, but it needs more feedback from platform users or movie audiences. At the same time, most existing studies include the UGC content of short video platforms and associated texts such as Douyin video special effects into the scope of short video marketing. Still, there needs to be more marketing research on the content characteristics and audiovisual language of short videos. The short video of movie marketing in this article refers to the short video marketing materials published by the official accounts related to the movie on the Douyin platform. Therefore, this study will explore the impact of short video content characteristics and audiovisual language on the marketing effect of the short video itself by studying the short video marketing materials released by the official movie account on the Douyin platform and provide more targeted marketing strategy suggestions for film marketers based on user feedback in in-depth interviews.

3.   Method

3.1.   Research Design

The study adopts qualitative analysis methods, analyzes representative short video marketing cases through case studies, combines in-depth interviews with short video marketing audiences, and deeply excavates its strategic characteristics and effects to provide targeted marketing suggestions for film marketers. Qualitative analysis can dig deep into the strategic characteristics and effects of short video

marketing. At the same time, the combination of case studies and in-depth interviews can comprehensively understand the operation of short video marketing on the Douyin platform, providing in-depth insights and enlightenment for film marketing practice.

3.2. Data Collection

Surveys and interviews were used to collect primary data. In the investigation stage, the retweets, comments, likes, and box office content released by the official account of the "May Day" movie on the Douyin platform will be collected. From May 17, 2024 to May 24, 2024, the study used in-depth interviews to collect empirical data, and 15 individuals were selected to conduct interviews (as shown in Table 1), and semi-structured in-depth interviews ranging from 30 to 60 minutes were conducted on each individual. Interviews are divided into online interviews and face-to-face interviews. The content of the interview mainly focuses on the daily contact of short video marketing, which is divided into four parts: content richness, emotional expression, the comprehensibility of audiovisual language, and the degree of authenticity and credibility. After informing the interviewees and obtaining consent, the interview content is recorded and converted into text to form the final interview text material.

Table 1: A list of interviewees.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Occupation	Method
A1	Male	16-20	Student	Telephone
A2	Male	16-20	Student	Face-to-face
A3	Female	21-25	Student	WeChat
A4	Female	21-25	Student	Face-to-face
A5	Female	21-25	Student	Face-to-face
A6	Female	21-25	Student	Face-to-face
A7	Female	21-25	Student	Face-to-face
A8	Female	21-25	Advertising	Face-to-face
A9	Male	26-30	Teacher	Face-to-face
A10	Female	26-30	Freelancer	Face-to-face
A11	Male	26-30	Advertising	Telephone
A12	Male	26-30	Doctor	WeChat
A13	Male	31-35	Practitioners in the film and television industry	WeChat
A14	Male	31-35	Practitioners in the film and television industry	WeChat
A15	Female	31-35	Professor	Face-to-face

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Content Richness

All respondents said that compared with traditional theatrical movie trailers, the short video marketing of movies showed higher content richness. The short video can provide more in-depth interview content with the main creative team (A7, A8, A9), more detailed offline roadshow records (A15, A13), and more comprehensive derivative promotional materials (A11, A14). Short film videos' marketing and publicity methods are more diverse, and their content-carrying capacity is far greater than traditional media. However, short-form video marketing inevitably has spoilers when carrying too much movie-related content. In addition to releasing film materials such as story background, main creators, and image style on short video platforms, some films release key plots, climaxes, or important plot twists to attract users on short video platforms to watch the movie. Respondents said that the placement of these contents would reduce their expectations for movies (A2, A12), affect the

viewing experience (A1, A3, A9), and even reduce their willingness to watch movies. During the promotion period of movies, different types of movies are affected differently by short video marketing. Suspense and horror films need to ensure a similar frequency of short video material release rhythm as other types of films in the same period, which is often difficult to meet marketing gimmicks and retain suspense (A12, A14). Respondents said that the short video marketing of movies is the same, lacking novelty and easily causing aesthetic fatigue among users of short video platforms (A5, A6).

3.3.2. Emotion Expression

With the development of the times, the age of the audience and the influx of new users, the main audience of the film market has undergone generational changes because the main audience of the film market is concentrated 18 - 35 years old now the post-90s and post-00s have become the main force of film consumption. According to the data in the "2023 Douyin Entertainment Report", 62% of Douyin entertainment content consumption users are users under the age of 40. Douyin's users show a significantly younger age. The user base faced by subdividing entertainment content is the highest in 24-30 years.

To meet the characteristics and needs of short video platform users and movie audiences, short video marketing focuses on emotional resonance with young people from hot topics on the Internet and other topics of interest to young people. Taking the content released by the official Douyin account of the "May Day" movie selected by the study as an example, the love movie "Moonstruck" released short video content with themes such as "Advice for Young People", "Child Stars Reproducing Childhood Memories of the Post-00s", and "Post-00s Love Concept", focusing on the emotional needs and resonance of young audiences, with more than 1 million views of related short videos; The comedy and suspense movie "A Hotpot Can't undo Nothing" released short video content with themes such as "Good Friends + Movies + Hot Pot" and "National Girls' Unified Speech", starting from topics such as young people's dating circles and love views, with an average of about 500,000 views of related short videos.

Social issues such as educational equity, environmental pollution, gender equality, and peaceful development are major focus of short video marketing. The action movie "Formed Police Unit" focuses on overseas peacekeeping, focusing on the daily training, real experience and social evaluation of Chinese peacekeepers. The suspenseful crime movie "Hovering Blade" focuses more on the rule of law society and crime cases and carries out short video marketing around hot social issues such as juvenile crime and the clandestine photography industry, which arouses the public's resonance and attention to social issues. However, some short video content in film marketing is keen to show the "emotional outbursts" and "high-energy clips" of the actors' acting skills. These content fragments often emphasize the display of the actors' momentary emotions but need more explanation of the cause and effect of the plot, making it difficult for the audience to understand and substitute (A5, A7).

3.3.3. Audio-Visual Language Comprehensibility

The original movie videos are long, and the horizontal screen playback format is unsuitable for mobile users' viewing habits. Therefore, the film marketing party re-creates and edits the materials into vertical screen videos suitable for short video platforms. It also adds text and background music to gain users' attention and likes, which converts them into movie-watching behaviors. The respondents said that the short video materials for movie marketing on the Douyin platform meet the audio-visual language characteristics of short videos, the viewing experience is smooth, and the picture impact is strong (A13, A14). To convey the relevant content of the film to users more clearly through short

videos, short video materials related to the original movie often add brief text descriptions to supplement the explanations of the characters' expressions, movements, psychological activities, etc., in the picture. The respondents said this text information should be addressed when watching relevant short video materials (A5, A7, A14). Some respondents said that the short video materials related to the original movie should convey information by interpreting the characters in the picture, and the text descriptions appear redundant (A2, A4). At the same time, respondents indicated that Douyin hits that did not match the movie's tone and were too loud would make people disgust and avoid it, reducing their willingness to watch the movie (A8, A10).

3.3.4. Authenticity and Credibility

The star effect and the fan economy have been important factors in film marketing in recent years. Respondents said they would go to the movies because of the star lineup (A1, A2, A5) and participate in the private viewing activities of fans (A1, A2). In the short video marketing of movies, the film marketers will use the star effect during the promotion period and put many related star materials, such as acting clips, set highlights, interview content, roadshow speeches, etc. Although the star effect can play a role in converting movie-watching behavior, urgent problems need to be solved in specific delivery situations. First, to attract fans to watch the movie, some movies will put a large number of related materials as supporting roles or guest stars in short video marketing, which makes users misunderstand the proportion of the star's role in the movie and there is a suspicion of "fraudulent marketing" [7]. Respondents said that they had seen some movies on short video platforms that put related materials mainly about a certain star in the marketing and mistakenly thought that the star was the main character in the movie. Still, after watching the movie, they found that the star only appeared for five minutes (A2). In addition, the public often questions traffic stars about their acting skills and other professional abilities. Respondents said that emphasizing popular stars in the marketing process reduces the film's integrity (A12, A15) and causes audiences to worry about the quality of the film (A8, A13, A14). Respondents all expressed disgust and suspicion about content such as "audience reactions", "set highlights", and "star endorsements".

4. Conclusion

4.1. Content Richness

Compared with the trailer of the movie theater, the short video marketing content is richer in disseminating movie information, covering film tidbits, actor introductions, plot synopsis and other aspects. Short video marketing of movies attracts audiences in various content forms and enhances the exposure and attractiveness of movies. While providing sufficient video information, short video marketing needs to ensure timely leakage of video content. To attract the audience's attention and increase the advance box office, some film companies or producers may excessively display the film's key plot, climax or important plot turning points in the short video. Leaking too much content too early may make the audience already understand the film's plot before watching the movie and reduce the audience's expectations and curiosity. Audiences watching the film in advance with fragmented content such as plot, scenes, and character settings may need more exploration and immersion in the film. The premature leakage of the film's content may also lead to the audience's willingness to watch the movie because they know the content in advance, which will affect the movie's word-of-mouth and box office performance.

The official account of the movie releases the corresponding content before, during and after the release of the movie, forming a relatively complete short video marketing model. Standardized marketing processes lead to homogenization in short films. The homogenization of marketing makes short films lack innovation and uniqueness, and it is not easy to attract the attention and resonance of

the audience, thus affecting the marketing effect and audience participation [8]. Secondly, homogeneous marketing content may lead to fatigue, reduce their expectations and interest in the movie, and affect their word-of-mouth and box office performance.

4.2. Emotion Expression

Short video film marketing is good at mobilizing users' emotions and triggering emotional resonance. Based on the characteristics of the users of the short video platform and the main audience groups of the movie, the short video marketing of the film carefully designs emotional content to arouse the resonance and emotional resonance of young audiences. At the same time, short video marketing not only focuses on the emotional needs of young audiences but also on connecting movies with social issues to enhance films' social influence and topicality. By exploring and presenting content related to social issues in short videos, the filmmaker aims to draw the audience's attention and think about social issues while adding a new dimension and depth to film marketing. Some intense negative emotional performances that lack context, such as screaming and pathos, may trigger the audience's avoidance behavior and reduce the willingness to watch the movie.

4.3. Audio-Visual Language Comprehensibility

Short videos are usually short, with a compact narrative structure and a fast pace, allowing viewers to quickly obtain information and emotional experience while meeting the audience's habits and needs for watching videos on mobile devices [9]. This study analyzes short video materials of movies from three aspects of audiovisual language: image, sound, and editing [10]. In terms of image, these short video materials are mostly cropped from the original film frame under the vertical screen waterfall flow presentation method of the short video platform, mainly focusing on close-ups, close-ups, and mid-shots of the characters. By highlighting the emotions and actions of the characters, the image characteristics of short videos further emphasize the dramatic tension of the plot. This method of cropping and close-ups allows the audience to focus more on the characters' expressions, actions, and emotional changes, thereby deepening the audience's understanding and resonance of the movie's plot. In terms of sound, short video materials often add sound effects to the original film and emphasize important plots. However, sometimes this emphasis may appear inappropriate or redundant, especially when using inappropriate Douyin hot songs. Short videos are secondary editing of the original film. Through fast picture switching and editing with a strong sense of rhythm, short videos can effectively convey the tension and suspense of the plot. However, being exposed to a large amount of short video materials before watching a movie will make the audience temporarily accustomed to fragmented, high-output, fast-paced audio-visual language, which will have a negative impact on the audience's viewing experience.

4.4. Authenticity and Credibility

Previous studies have confirmed that the star effect is important in marketing short videos for movies. With the development of social media, the scale and influence of the star fan group have continued to expand, and the fan economy has become an important force in increasing the early traffic and box office of movies. Traffic stars play an important role in marketing short videos for movies, and their casting clips, acting demonstrations, roadshows and other content have become important content to attract audiences. However, to attract more fans to convert into movie-watching behavior, some film companies may need to emphasize content related to traffic stars in short video marketing, including exaggerating the star's role or over-promoting a star rather than the movie as a whole. This situation may cause ordinary audiences to question the authenticity of the movie. Interviews found that

audiences dislike exaggerated and posed content, and will question the authenticity of content such as "audience reactions", "set highlights" and "star endorsements".

5. Discussion

Based on previous research and market performance, this study suggests strategies and suggestions for marketing short video films. In terms of content richness, the highlights of the movie, behind-the-scenes footage and character relationships are displayed in short videos to stimulate the audience's interest and curiosity while retaining the suspense of the original film to arouse the audience's desire to explore and watch the movie. To achieve emotional marketing, combined with the current social hot topics, it is cleverly introduced into the short video marketing of the film, associated with the content of the movie, and arousing the audience's resonance and discussion to enhance the social influence and topicality of the film, and achieve the win-win effect of short video marketing and social feedback. Based on the characteristics of audio-visual language and short video platform, when producing short videos, the audio-visual habits and language characteristics of short video platform users are combined to attract users' attention and improve the effect of content dissemination while maintaining an organic connection with film content to ensure the effectiveness and authenticity of short video marketing. Considering the role of the star effect in promoting the box office of the movie, make full use of the influence and appeal of traffic stars to attract more fans' attention and participation, to effectively divert the flow to the publicity and promotion of the movie, and at the same time avoid "fraudulent marketing", excessive marketing leads to the audience's doubts about the authenticity of the movie.

Combined with the intelligent algorithms and data analysis capabilities of short video platforms such as Douyin, the target audience group is accurately located. The personalized direction of short video marketing is selected according to the user's interests, hobbies, behavioral characteristics and other information to avoid homogenization of marketing, accurately deliver short video content, improve the exposure and audience participation of the content, and achieve the purpose of precision marketing and effective promotion.

References

[1] Han, Y., Kim, H. G., & Lan, T. (2022). The Impact of Multimedia Video Marketing on Consumer Psychology and Behavior. Mobile Information Systems, 2022(1), 5778025.

[2] Alghizzawi, M., Alzghoul, A., Alhanatleh, H., Omeish, F., Abdrabbo, T., & Ezmigna, I. (2024). Short video marketing and consumer engagement: Mediation effect of social sharing. International Journal of Data and Network Science, 8(3), 1379-1386.

[3] Hsieh, J. K., Hsieh, Y. C., & Tang, Y. C. (2012). Exploring the disseminating behaviors of eWOM marketing: persuasion in online video. Electronic Commerce Research, 12, 201-224.

[4] Oh, S., Baek, H., & Ahn, J. (2017). Predictive value of video-sharing behavior: sharing of movie trailers and box-office revenue. Internet Research, 27(3), 691-708.

[5] Ahmed, U., Waqas, H., & Afzal, M. T. (2020). Pre-production box-office success quotient forecasting. Soft Computing, 24(9), 6635-6653.

[6] Dalal, H. A., O'Hanlon, R., & Yacobucci, K. L. (2017). Video marketing for libraries: a practical guide for librarians (Vol. 33). Rowman & Littlefield.

[7] Nat, P. J. V., & Keep, W. W. (2002). Marketing fraud: An approach for differentiating multilevel marketing from pyramid schemes. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 21(1), 139-151.

[8] Tian, Changle. (2019). Advantages and dilemmas of short video social applications in film marketing. Contemporary Cinema (04), 115-118.

[9] Penland. (2015). New media users: more active or passive. Contemporary Communication (5), 5.

[10] Liu, X., Shi, S. W., Teixeira, T., & Wedel, M. (2018). Video content marketing: The making of clips. Journal of Marketing, 82(4), 86-101.