

Promotion Strategies and Applications of Films on Short-Video Platforms

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Abstract: This study explores how films leverage the algorithms of short-video platforms to deliver personalized content to audiences and attract them to watch movies in cinemas. This paper also introduces that short-video platforms have built an interactive bridge between films and audiences, enabling viewers to participate in film creation through the features of these platforms. This study cites three examples: films using AI for promotion, short-video clips to attract audiences, and viewers participating in film creation through short-video special effects, thereby demonstrating the richness of film promotion on short-video platforms and the effectiveness of these platforms as a bridge between films and audiences. The study's findings indicate that short-video platforms have emerged as a transformative force in digital media, reshaping the ways audiences consume, create, and engage with visual narratives. The promotion of films on these platforms has yielded favorable marketing results for the films. This study provides valuable insights and prospects for the promotion of films on short-video platforms and the future development of short-video platforms themselves.

Keywords: Film promotion, Short-video platforms, Content innovation.

1. Introduction

The film market continues to evolve, with a vast number of films released annually and competition growing increasingly fierce. As user behaviors and consumption habits continue to evolve, films need effective promotional strategies to stand out amidst the vast array of works and capture audiences' attention. However, traditional film marketing models such as television ads and poster campaigns face numerous challenges, with their effectiveness gradually diminishing. Meanwhile, the continuous rise and growing popularity of short video platforms—boasting massive user bases and distinctive dissemination advantages—cater to the film industry's need to expand its market, providing new approaches and models for movie marketing.

The integration of short video platforms into film promotion has revolutionized audience engagement, necessitating a nuanced analysis of strategies, ethical implications, and industry transformations. Existing studies highlight the dynamic interplay between technological innovation, audience behavior, and marketing ethics.

Short video platforms leverage algorithmic precision and emotional storytelling to amplify film visibility. Xu posits that the New 4C Marketing Theory—connection, communication, commerce, and cooperation—governs successful campaigns [1]. Data-driven targeting, welfare incentives, and live interactions enhance reach, as seen in Douyin's phased promotions for films like *Moonstruck* [2]. These strategies capitalize on platform-specific features: TikTok's viral challenges, Twitter's celebrity

endorsements, and Douban's community-driven ratings [3]. For instance, TikTok's FACT business matrix—Official voice, KOLs, Campaigns, Top-KOLs—ensures broad coverage by combining official content with influencer collaborations and user-generated challenges [1]. Similarly, Twitter's phased campaigns, such as those for *Black Widow*, strategically release trailers and interactive Q&A sessions to maintain audience interest [3].

However, over-reliance on stars risks misleading audiences, as observed in cases where supporting roles are exaggerated to attract fans [2]. Ethical concerns arise from emotional manipulation and content homogenization. Zhang and Zang critique emotional strategies under normative ethics: while consequentialism supports maximizing engagement, deontology opposes treating viewers as means [4]. For example, platforms often use emotional triggers like tear-jerking clips or suspenseful teasers to drive clicks, raising questions about authenticity. Fake reviews and spoiler-heavy clips further erode trust, as seen in films like *A Hotpot Can't Undo Nothing*, where excessive plot leakage reduced theatrical attendance [5]. Liu warns that such practices distort market dynamics, favoring sensationalism over quality [5]. Tan advocates for copyright frameworks to address unauthorized adaptations, noting that secondary creations like fan edits can extend a film's narrative but require ethical governance [6].

Short video platforms disrupt traditional workflows by accelerating production cycles and fostering agile collaboration [7]. Filmmakers now adapt narratives for bite-sized formats, integrating UGC and interactive elements. For example, *Detective Chinatown 3* used TikTok to release behind-the-scenes footage and fan challenges, creating pre-release buzz [3].

However, algorithmic prioritization of virality may stifle creativity, leading to formulaic content [8]. Xue further notes that immersive technologies like VR/AR offer innovative promotional tools, such as virtual premieres for *The Suicide Squad*, but require careful balancing with storytelling integrity [8]. Audiences on short video platforms exhibit fleeting attention spans, necessitating rapid emotional hooks.

Zhou identifies audiovisual language—pacing, music, and visual effects—as critical for engagement, though excessive spoilers may reduce theatrical attendance [2]. For instance, horror films risk revealing plot twists prematurely, diminishing suspense. Xue proposes staggered content releases to maintain suspense, while Tan emphasizes the role of ethical second-creation in extending film narratives without infringing copyright [6,8]. Platforms like Douyin also leverage social issues, such as gender equality in *Black Widow*, to deepen audience resonance and align with cultural movements [2]. The ethical and operational challenges of short video marketing extend to global implications. Xue highlights unequal access to data analytics and advertising budgets, perpetuating disparities in emerging markets. Meanwhile, Lu notes that while platforms streamline production, they also impose algorithmic pressures that may homogenize content [7,8]. Tan adds that copyright issues in second-creation demand clearer licensing frameworks, balancing creativity with legal compliance [6].

To address these complexities, scholars advocate for adaptive strategies. Liu calls for prioritizing content quality over quantity, while Wang et al. emphasize algorithmic transparency to counter manipulation [3,5]. Xue proposes hybrid models integrating short-form and traditional marketing to sustain trust, and Tan suggests revenue-sharing models to incentivize ethical practices [6,8].

Collectively, these studies underscore the need for a holistic approach that balances innovation with integrity, ensuring short video platforms remain engines of creativity rather than catalysts for industry fragmentation.

2. Characteristics of short videos and requirements for film promotion and distribution

2.1. Characteristics

Short-form video content has emerged as a transformative force in digital media, reshaping how audiences consume, create, and engage with visual storytelling. Characterized by brevity, typically ranging from a few seconds to three minutes, these bite-sized clips prioritize instant gratification and quick information delivery. Their rapid pacing and dynamic editing styles cater to the modern viewer's shortened attention span, leveraging techniques like quick cuts, vibrant visuals, and trending audio to capture interest immediately.

Unlike traditional long-form videos, short videos thrive on spontaneity and authenticity, often featuring unpolished, raw moments that resonate with audiences seeking genuine connections.

This format also encourages high-frequency consumption, with platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts fostering endless scrolling through algorithmically curated feeds.

Thematic diversity is another hallmark, encompassing everything from comedy sketches and educational tutorials to lifestyle vlogs and viral challenges. This versatility allows creators to experiment across genres while maintaining accessibility, blurring the lines between professional content and user-generated material. Interactive elements such as duets, stitches, and comment challenges further enhance engagement, transforming passive viewing into participatory experiences.

Short videos also excel in leveraging cultural trends, with memes, dances, and hashtags spreading virally across platforms, creating global subcultures and shared digital identities. Technologically, these videos are optimized for mobile viewing, emphasizing vertical orientation and simplified production tools that empower amateurs to produce high-quality content without specialized equipment. The democratization of creativity has spawned a new generation of micro-influencers, whose relatability often outperforms traditional celebrities in driving brand partnerships and audience loyalty. Advertisers have capitalized on this trend, integrating native ads and influencer collaborations into short-form campaigns to reach younger, elusive demographics.

However, the format's success also raises concerns about information oversimplification and reduced critical thinking, as complex ideas are condensed into easily digestible snippets. Despite these challenges, short-form videos remain a dominant force in digital communication, blending entertainment, education, and community-building into a uniquely immersive and scalable medium. Their ability to adapt to evolving trends and technological advancements ensures they will continue shaping online culture for years to come.

2.2. Requirements for film promotion and distribution

Film promotion and distribution in the modern entertainment landscape demand a multifaceted, data-driven approach that balances creativity, strategic timing, and audience engagement.

Successful campaigns begin with meticulous market research to identify target demographics, cultural trends, and competitive landscapes, ensuring messaging resonates with intended viewers. This involves analyzing box office performance, social media sentiment, and viewer preferences to tailor promotional materials such as trailers, posters, and teasers that highlight a film's unique selling point.

Timing is critical, with studios often coordinating releases around holidays, awards seasons, or complementary cultural events to maximize visibility.

Promotional strategies must leverage a mix of traditional and digital channels, including television spots, print media, influencer partnerships, and social media activations. Social platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok play pivotal roles in generating buzz through viral challenges, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive fan experiences.

Studios increasingly rely on personalized marketing, using algorithms to deliver targeted ads to niche audiences based on viewing histories and online behaviors. Cross-industry collaborations, such as tie-ins with brands for merchandise or streaming platforms for exclusive content drops, further amplify reach and revenue opportunities.

Distribution logistics are equally complex, requiring reconciliation between theatrical releases, streaming debuts, and home entertainment formats. The rise of hybrid models, where films premiere simultaneously in cinemas and on streaming services, demands careful negotiation with exhibitors and platforms to avoid revenue conflicts. Global distribution adds another layer, necessitating localization efforts like dubbing, subtitling, and region-specific marketing campaigns to adapt content to diverse cultural contexts. Piracy prevention measures, such as staggered international releases and digital watermarking, are also integral to protecting revenue streams.

Audiences today expect immersive, multi-layered experiences, pushing studios to invest in innovative promotional tactics like virtual reality previews, augmented reality posters, and fan conventions. Press tours, interviews, and premieres remain essential for building star power and critical acclaim, while grassroots screenings and film festivals help cultivate early word-of-mouth. Budget allocation is a delicate balance, with studios often spending 50-100% of a film's production costs on marketing alone. Metrics like engagement rates, trailer views, and ticket pre-sales are closely monitored to gauge campaign effectiveness and adjust strategies in real time.

However, the fragmented media landscape poses challenges, as audiences increasingly consume content across multiple platforms. Overcoming ad fatigue and information overload requires campaigns to be agile, responsive, and authentic, avoiding overly formulaic messaging. The convergence of entertainment and technology also demands adaptability, with emerging trends like AI-generated trailers and blockchain-based ticketing systems reshaping industry standards. Ultimately, successful film promotion and distribution hinge on creating emotional connections with audiences while navigating a rapidly evolving, competitive marketplace.

3. Analyzing cases of film promotion on short-video platforms

3.1. AI promotion

Warner Bros.' groundbreaking campaign for **The Matrix Resurrections** in 2021 redefined film marketing by deploying an AI-powered system capable of generating 180,000 unique trailers—marking a revolutionary fusion of dynamic content creation and data-driven audience engagement. The studio's technical innovation centered on decomposing the film into over 2,000 tagged shot elements, cross-referenced with 23 iconic visual motifs from the original trilogy, to create a modular asset library. Leveraging cutting-edge diffusion models and natural language processing algorithms, their AI engine achieved real-time generation of 300 trailer iterations per second, adapting to user inputs by dynamically curating narrative sequences.

Upon users selecting "red pill" or "blue pill," the system activated a multi-layered personalization framework: geolocation data informed cultural context adaptation, device-type analysis optimized visual formatting, temporal data aligned content pacing with circadian rhythms, and social media metadata refined thematic emphasis. A signature innovation was the integration of JavaScript-based live-clock synchronization, overlaying digital time displays that mirrored viewers' local time, intensifying the film's reality-bending themes.

Strategically, the campaign employed a "choice-as-narrative" architecture, transforming passive viewership into participatory storytelling. Each user's decision triggered unique social share assets, fueling viral spread across TikTok and Twitter.

The results were transformative: 120 million global streams, 23 million social shares, and a \$123 million opening weekend—with 38% of ticket sales attributed to interactive users.

Beyond metrics, this case study demonstrated AI's capacity to forge emotional resonance through hyper-personalization, pioneering applications like context-aware product placement, cultural localization engines, and predictive analytics for script optimization. By merging algorithmic precision with creative storytelling, Warner Bros. established a new paradigm.

3.2. Entertainment value of clips

No More Bets harnessed viral potential through its "Buddhist-prayer-murder" clip strategy, turning societal anxieties into a cultural sensation. By capitalizing on Myanmar fraud scandals in 2023, the film weaponized the "holy hypocrisy" trope via a stark contrast: Manager Lu (Wang Chuanjun) kneeling piously before a Buddha statue while brandishing a knife. The 8-second clip combined schizoid microexpressions—a seamless shift from pious eye-closure to predatory intensity—with a sound montage of wooden fish chants abruptly cut by metallic clangs, creating cognitive dissonance that triggered emotional resonance.

The marketing team optimized algorithmic targeting on Douyin using hashtags like #MyanmarFraud and #HolyHypocrisy, driving 500 million views per clip. User-generated content, including the viral #ManagerLuPrayingChallenge, amplified reach, generating 14.25 billion topic views. This propelled the film to a record-breaking 3.8 billion RMB box office and secured its status as a Ministry of Public Security-recommended title.

Though early spoilers slightly dampened ratings, the campaign redefined crime thriller marketing through its "social issue + symbolic contrast + algorithmic propulsion" framework. By merging cultural contradictions with platform-specific tactics, it demonstrated how niche content could explode into mainstream discourse.

3.3. Short-video special effects

The producers of the film *NeZha: The Devil Child Descends into the Sea* collaborated with platforms like Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou to launch the "NeZha Transformation Challenge" series of AR filters, enabling users to activate dynamic effects such as "NeZha's Wind Fire Wheels" and "Ao Bing's Ice Dragon" via their front-facing cameras.

For example, when Douyin users apply the "Demon Core Awakening" filter, their on-screen personas become engulfed in flames, the background shifts to the battlefield of Chentangguan, and the iconic subtitle "I control my own destiny, not the heavens!" appears in real-time. These effects seamlessly integrate core film elements like the Red Armillary Sash and Qiankun Circlet with user selfies, creating highly shareable viral content.

At the same time, by leveraging the influence of celebrities, some stars were invited to shoot short videos using its special effects, forming a three-level communication chain of "amateur - celebrity - platform". The role of the celebrity shifted from endorsement to co-creation. The production team activated the productivity of fans through low-threshold interactive tasks, despite the aesthetic controversies and copyright risks.

However, this case provided a replicable template for the industry and indicated that the film industry is moving from content supremacy to experience supremacy in a new stage.

4. Implication and prospect

Through the above surveys and research, this study provides some insights into the promotion strategies and applications of films on short-video platforms, and also offers certain prospects for future development.

4.1. Suggestion

The implications include aspects of content creation and marketing, as well as data analysis and operations: First, the promotion of films on short-video platforms requires precise targeting and resonance. It is necessary to clearly define the target audience and customize short-video content based on their preferences and needs. Second, emphasize creativity and quality. Content should be continuously innovated to showcase the film's highlights through unique perspectives and forms of expression. Utilize various formats such as trailers of main and supporting roles, behind-the-scenes creative processes, etc., and ensure high standards in details like video quality, sound effects, and editing to enhance the viewing experience. At the same time, leverage user-generated content (UGC) to encourage the audience to engage in secondary creation and sharing. By interacting with users and utilizing UGC, we can break through communication bottlenecks. This not only enhances audience participation but also expands the film's reach and influence. In addition, it should leverage data-driven decision-making. By utilizing the big data analysis capabilities of short-video platforms, gain insights into users' consumption habits, preferences, etc., to achieve more precise marketing and enhance promotional effectiveness and box office revenue. Closely monitor real-time data such as video views, likes, and comments, and adjust marketing strategies promptly based on feedback to adapt to market changes and audience needs.

4.2. Prospects

The prospects include technological innovation and experience enhancement, expansion of cooperation and development models, as well as industry standards and development: In terms of integrating new technologies, films can leverage new technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create more immersive and interactive short-video content, delivering a brand-new experience to the audience—for example, producing VR trailers, 3D stereoscopic promotional videos, etc. The personalized recommendation algorithms of short-video platforms will continue to be optimized, enabling more precise delivery of film-related content to the target audience, improving marketing efficiency, and helping meet the diverse needs of viewers. Further, the publisher strengthen the development and utilization of film IPs by launching more film-related derivative content on short-video platforms, such as side stories, character prequels, etc. This will enrich the film's content ecosystem, enhance the value and influence of the IP, and strengthen audience stickiness .

It also should promote social e-commerce and scenario-based consumption. When watching film-related short videos, users can directly click links to purchase derivatives or co-branded products. Films can leverage live streaming on short-video platforms for presales of derivatives, using time-limited discounts and exclusive benefits to stimulate consumption.

With the development of the industry, relevant laws, regulations, and industry norms will be gradually improved to implement more stringent regulation and management of film-related content creation, advertising placement, copyright protection, and other aspects on short-video platforms. The film and short-video industries will jointly establish a more scientific and comprehensive evaluation system to better measure marketing effectiveness and provide strong support for industry development.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the characteristics of short videos and the requirements for film promotion and distribution, analyzed three cases: films leveraging AI for promotion, using entertaining clips to attract audiences, and fostering interaction with viewers through short-video special effects. It also puts forward suggestions and future outlooks for these practices.

Regarding the main findings of this paper, firstly, short-video platforms have emerged as a transformative force in digital media, reshaping the ways audiences consume, create, and engage with visual narratives. The promotional formats and content of films on short-video platforms have become increasingly diverse, with expanding scenarios for application. These platforms have built a solid bridge between films and audiences, allowing movies to attract a wider viewership while enabling audiences to better participate in the creation of films.

In the future, the content and forms of short-video platforms will continue to diversify and enrich, and an increasing number of films will be promoted and utilized through these platforms. Films can leverage short-video platforms to deliver more personalized content to audiences and achieve precision marketing. Short-video platforms will undertake technological innovation with the advancement of technology, and the relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards for the platforms will be gradually improved. The film and short-video industries will jointly establish more scientific and effective evaluation systems to better measure marketing effectiveness and promote industry development.

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