

Video Creators at a Crossroads: Maintaining Traditional Content or Embracing Innovation Amidst Creative Bottlenecks

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Abstract. In today's dynamic landscape of rapidly evolving short-form and medium-to-long-form video content, numerous creators who initially achieved virality through a singular piece of content frequently face a plateau characterized by diminishing viewership and engagement metrics, attributable to the attenuation of audience novelty. Using theoretical analysis and case studies, this paper discusses two self-rescue paths: "continuing to output the traditional contents" and "switching to a new track". The results show that the optimal approach is not to change the theme completely, but to extend the creative boundaries within the existing professional field, which creators are familiar with, while retaining the core knowledge or content, introducing new forms of expression and narrative method, and expanding new work contents. This innovation strengthens existing fan loyalty and leverages the platform's algorithm to favor novelty, creating a mutually beneficial scenario for fan engagement and growth. The study highlights that diversification involves not just content transfer, but also deep exploration and innovative presentation within specialized areas, which is crucial for the sustained growth of creators and the diversification of platform ecosystems.

Keywords: Social Media, Video Creators, Video Content, Traditional, Innovative

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of algorithm-driven video platforms, creators often gather a large audience quickly with a single content. However, after the "first wave of traffic dividends" fades away, the growth of views and fans often slows down simultaneously, and creators then fall into a creative bottleneck intertwined with inspiration depletion and emotional burnout. A research paper posits that recommendation engines on platforms like YouTube exacerbate content creators' concerns regarding precipitous declines in audience engagement via a "boom amplification-rapid attenuation" dynamic, termed "algorithmic anxiety." [1].

In this predicament, they must choose between two paths: one is to stick to the traditional content framework they are familiar with to stabilize the core audience, and the other is to risk fan loss to explore new themes to restart the growth of views and fans. Longitudinal monitoring studies corroborate that initial choices by content creators concerning diversity exert a marked influence on

subsequent audience retention. Within the realms of cinematic analysis and technological assessment, an inverse U-shaped correlation exists between content diversification tactics and viewer engagement duration [2]. This choice concerns the sustainability of personal channels and profoundly affects the degree of diversity of the platform's content ecosystem.

To analyze this situation and solve the problem, this paper adopts the methods of theoretical analysis and case listing. With the help of citing previous analyses, this paper further observes the examples of creators on video platforms, in comparing the differences between "persistence" and "innovation" in viewing data, audience stickiness, and channel resilience. This study suggests a balanced approach to conservatism and innovation for video creators facing growth limits or audience decline. It also promotes content diversification and professionalization on video platforms, fostering a dynamic content ecosystem.

2. The reasons for the contradiction between traditional content and innovative content

The increasing monetization of social media platforms and the evolution of their algorithms force video content creators to confront a fundamental dilemma in content strategy: the choice between perpetuating established content formats and pioneering novel, innovative content. The reasons for this contradiction between "conservatism" and "innovation" are diverse. It is not only the confusion of individual creators, but also the result of the joint influence of platform mechanisms, audience psychology and creative ecosystems.

2.1. The "guiding locking" of the platform mechanism

Current video platforms (such as Tik-Tok, YouTube and Bilibili) generally adopt algorithmic recommendation systems based on user behavior data. Content exposure highly depends on immediate feedback indicators such as completion of viewing, like counts, and comment rate. Research indicates that platform algorithms exhibit a propensity to perpetuate the visibility of a creator's initial high-performing content. This phenomenon, wherein "content with a strong initial reception is more likely to receive subsequent recommendations," engenders a "path-dependent distribution." [3]. Meanwhile, Postigo pointed out that social platforms mostly have implicit requirements for the update frequency of creators to increase user activity [4]. Under the high-pressure and high-frequency update mechanism, creators, considering efficiency and risk control, often tend to "replicate their past contents" rather than invest time and energy in developing new directions. This platform mechanism itself restrains content innovation.

2.2. The solidification of audience expectations

From the audience's perspective, the audience's perception of creators is often based on "label acceptance". Lobat proposed that audiences are accustomed to identifying and selecting content through fixed classifications and styles, and this preference invisibly builds the expectation of "content consistency" for creators [5]. Once creators deviate from their "original form", they are prone to consequences such as a decline in views, doubts in the comments, and even the loss of fans. Furthermore, fans and creators often establish an "emotional connection" or "daily companionship". When the content direction changes, some viewers will regard it as "character betrayal" and thus exert psychological pressure on the creator.

2.3. The creator's own burnout and identity anxiety

Sustained, high-intensity content creation focused on a specific direction can induce cognitive fatigue and deplete inspiration at the creator level. Duffy and Hund have observed that numerous creators, facing the conjoined pressures of traffic and monetization, progressively transition into "self-brand managers," where content creation becomes a form of labor, rather than an authentic expression of interest [6]. Meanwhile, the "career anxiety" brought about by the professionalization of content also makes innovation more difficult. Trying new content may mean a short-term decline in views and an uncertain market response. These practical considerations make many creators prefer to stay in the familiar "safe zone" rather than take risks to try new themes.

3. The benefits of continuing to create familiar content and the possible problems

3.1. The benefits of creating familiar content

Continuing the existing content types can significantly reduce production costs and improve efficiency. Take Marques Brownlee (MKBHD), a well-known technology review blogger on YouTube, as an example. Since 2008, he has continuously conducted in-depth reviews around smart devices, forming a highly stable content structure and style. This consistency not only strengthened its professionalism and brand image but also helped him in the release of "The World's Largest iPhone Has a Secret..." in 2023. It has received over 41 million views and 1.9 million likes [7]. Marques Brownlee's channel, characterized by a consistent content paradigm, has mitigated variability in content production, thereby sustaining robust audience retention despite the proliferation of emergent content producers.

In addition, the stability of the content style can effectively establish the audience's sense of identity and interaction habits. TikTok Creator Khaby Lame has long insisted on using wordless satirical videos to deal with complex life skills and has attracted more than 160 million fans with its recognition. Khaby's success indicates that a fixed style helps cultivate user stickiness. Due to their familiarity with the mode of expression, viewers develop entrenched viewing habits, and the platform's recommendation algorithms further facilitate the identification and promotion of such readily identifiable content.

3.2. Possible problems to be faced

Continuously creating familiar content also hides multiple challenges. First of all, the aesthetic interests of the audience are highly fluid. Excessive repetition may lead to "viewing fatigue". Research indicates that audiences exhibit a greater propensity to seek out creators employing novel frameworks when the originality of the material diminishes [8]. For instance, Chinese creator "Office Xiao Ye" became an instant hit with his short videos of "cooking in the office", but due to the lack of breakthroughs in creativity for a long time, the play volume of his new work had dropped significantly to less than 700,000 by 2023, and he has since stopped updating. This indicates that the audience has a continuous demand for the novelty of the content, and a long-term fixed style may gradually weaken the appeal of the creator.

Secondly, the platform's recommendation algorithms also favor novel and differentiated content. The top YouTube vlogger, PewDiePie, shifted his focus from early game live-streaming (such as "Minecraft" and "Amnesia") to vlogs and reaction videos, covering a wide range of content. This transformation was not only a response to the "viewing fatigue" of the audience, but also

demonstrated his awareness of actively adapting to the content consumption trend. Vlogs are closer to real life than game videos, and reactions are more interactive, which aligns with the current audience's pursuit of authenticity and emotional resonance. Even for top creators, it is challenging to maintain popularity in the fierce competition if they neglect content updates. PewDiePie's transformation is a powerful illustration of this. In addition, the creator's psychological state is also a problem that cannot be ignored. Producing a single piece of content for a long time can easily lead to "creative burnout", resulting in a decline in enthusiasm and motivation. After experiencing initial popularity, many mature creators have gradually realized that innovation is not only the demand of the audience but also a significant driving force for their continuous growth.

4. The changes in innovative content and the possible negative impacts

4.1. The change of innovative content

The innovation of video creators will bring about significant positive changes in practical operation. First of all, content innovation can effectively enhance the novelty and stickiness of the audience. As the content on the platform becomes increasingly homogeneous, the audience's demand for unique experiences is growing stronger. By introducing novel narrative methods or unique visual styles, creators can break the existing framework, stimulate the audience's interest, and increase the content's click-through rate and completion rate. Innovative content can also help creators break through their original audience circles, attract a more diverse audience group, and provide opportunities for future business cooperation and brand expansion.

Secondly, content innovation has the potential to augment creators' expertise and long-term viability. Creators who possess innovative capabilities are better equipped to adapt to shifting platform algorithms and audience preferences, enabling them to adjust their strategies and thrive in dynamic environments.

The latest research indicates that diverse content attempts can help creators achieve higher cross-platform expressiveness, thereby maintaining competitiveness in different platform systems [9]. During this process, creators can accumulate production experience in various fields, expand their influence and share through cross-border content cooperation, and enhance their brands' comprehensive value.

4.2. Possible negative impacts

Content innovation, of course, also harbors potential risks that cannot be ignored. First, frequently changing the content style may lead to losing the original audience group. Audiences usually develop emotional connections due to some familiar content. When creators frequently break away from their original fields, it may disappoint or alienate some loyal fans. This emotional break is often more challenging to repair than a simple decline in viewing volume. Furthermore, a lack of coherence in innovative attempts may also weaken the brand recognition of creators, causing confusion among audiences about their positioning and thereby affecting the efficiency of content dissemination.

Concurrently, pioneering content creation elevates the exigencies for originators, necessitating amplified temporal and energetic commitments, potentially engendering heightened psychological duress. Craig and Cunningham also underscore that content creators, in their pursuit of novelty, must perpetually calibrate the equilibrium between unbridled creative autonomy and prevailing market anticipations [10]. If this process is unbalanced, it will likely lead to emotional fluctuations and a

decline in creative motivation. Moreover, if innovative content lacks a clear strategic plan, it may also lead to the fragmentation of the brand image. The chaotic combination of different styles and themes can easily cause cognitive confusion among the audience, weakening their recognition of the creator's identity. Especially in algorithm-driven distribution systems, brand consistency is an essential factor that affects recommendation efficiency. Once the content direction changes frequently, creators may lose the precise positioning of their account profiles by the platform's algorithm, resulting in a decline in exposure and the loss of viewers, affecting the overall growth potential of the account.

5. Continue to create the familiar content while seeking innovative solutions in the same area

Continuing with the original content creation and developing new tracks both have advantages and risks. Employing a monolithic development paradigm is deleterious to the sustained augmentation of video creators. From the vantage of extant video platform operational modalities, while upholding the fabrication of authentic content videos and adhering to the thematic consistency of the original material, the exploration of novel expressive modalities constitutes a pivotal strategy for the enduring advancement of creators. This approach can not only continue the interest base of the existing audience, but also stimulate new viewing motivation through form innovation and expand the boundaries of the audience [11]. Especially in niche fields such as sports, the second dimension, and knowledge sharing, the continuity of content themes helps build brand recognition. In contrast, the diversification of content forms has become a critical path to break through growth bottlenecks.

5.1. Take the Bilibili blogger "Qiumihui ShowMe" as an example

The transformation case of Bilibili blogger "Qiumihui ShowMe" well demonstrates the practical process of this strategy. Qiumihui ShowMe, initially focused on random street interviews with football fans, emphasizing immediacy and a relaxed atmosphere. As an example, his 2022 representative work, a video featuring interviews with fans observing the World Cup matches in bars near Wembley Stadium, has garnered approximately 200,000 views and over 5,000 likes for a single piece, thereby establishing a consistent and identifiable content framework. However, as content production becomes increasingly mature, the audience's interest in the street interview model has gradually waned. The play count of some works has dropped to around 50,000, and feedback such as "content repetition" and "monotonous pace" has also emerged in the comment sections.

To break this situation, ShowMe, the fan gathering, did not change its theme area. Instead, it innovated the content form under the original theme of Football Culture. On September 20, 2024, they launched a brand-new podcast program called "Chill for a While", inviting people related to the football circle to share the stories behind it in a light-hearted and in-depth dialogue format. The inaugural episode garnered 182,000 plays and over 7,000 likes, markedly outperforming concurrent street interviews, indicating a favorable audience reception to the novel format. This innovative methodology preserves the field's inherent professionalism and allure, while simultaneously affording a more immersive and nuanced observational experience via emergent narrative frameworks and pacing. As Lobato pointed out, in the new media environment, the form innovation of content can effectively extend the life cycle and simultaneously enhance the recommendation priority within the platform [12].

At the operational level, Qiumihui ShowMe has adopted a progressive update strategy. That is, while continuing to release traditional street interview videos, it gradually pushes out the "Chill for a While" podcast series. This approach not only mitigates undue content fragmentation for the

established viewership but also fosters viewing proclivities aligned with the novel cadence. Regarding topic selection, the new program still closely adheres to football-related topics but expands to broader perspectives such as fans' lives and career development, enhancing the depth and resonance of the content. Regarding shooting methods, it has shifted from fast-paced random interviews to slow-paced, conversational recordings, highlighting authenticity and a sense of closeness, which aligns with the current audience's preference for "companion-type content".

Overall, the case of Qiumihui ShowMe demonstrates that innovating content forms within familiar fields can not only sustain existing audience resources but also stimulate new growth momentum. This strategy has significant application value in situations where content homogeneity is severe and audience interests change frequently. Content creators can effectively maintain their content's vitality and promote their brands' long-term development by maintaining domain focus while actively exploring diverse expression methods. However, this dual requirement of "staying true to the original characteristics while constantly innovating" may also pressure the creators significantly. To cater to the hot trends of the audience, some creators may choose more exaggerated or extreme forms of expression, which may lead to a deviation between the content quality and the original creative intention. Therefore, finding a balance between innovation and persistence, while maintaining the uniqueness of the content and avoiding excessive commercialisation and fatigue, is a topic that creators need to consider seriously in the future.

6. Conclusion

This study explores how video creators can achieve content innovation while maintaining the original audience base in content creation. This study, leveraging theoretical analyses and case-specific investigations, posits a viable strategic approach: Within the domain pertinent to the source video, uphold the thematic structure of well-established content while prioritizing the innovation of novel content formats as the principal trajectory for advancement. In this case, Bilibili blogger "Qiumihui Showme" launched a podcast program called "Chill for a While" based on the original stadium interview content. While maintaining the original football theme, it expanded to a more in-depth and relaxed dialogue format, thus attracting audiences with different preferences.

However, this study is limited by its sample size and lack of diversity across content types and creator scales. Future research should incorporate more creator practices and quantitative analysis to assess the impact of innovative strategies on audience retention, engagement, and monetization.

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