How Chinese Short Video News Cover Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Case Study of Pengpai's Douyin Account

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Abstract: Since February 2022, the situation in Russia and Ukraine has changed dramatically, with the outbreak of an armed conflict on a scale that has attracted widespread international attention. As a representative of China's mainstream media biased towards internationalization, Pengpai is naturally extremely concerned about the Russia-Ukraine conflict. To capture attention on the development of Chinese mainstream media and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the author adopted a content analysis approach to analyze how Chinese mainstream media, Pengpai, published news about the Russia-Ukraine conflict on Douyin and summarize some of the Pengpai reports (N=64). Overall, the research finds that by referencing more Chinese citation sources, particularly the news media, Pengpai demonstrates its professionalism. At the same time, the analysis reveals that Pengpai's tendency to report on the Russia-Ukraine conflict is in line with the Chinese government's attitude, with a neutral stance and calls for peace as well as putting people first.

Keywords: short video news, Pengpai, Russia-Ukraine conflict, coverage features, Douyin

1. Introduction

On March 29, 2023, China released the "2023 China Internet Audio-Visual Development Research Report", stating that the number of Chinese short video users reached 10.12 billion, accounting for 94.8% of Internet users [1]. Indeed, short videos have become a critical component of citizens' social lives, being used as a tool for entertainment and communication [2]. As more and more people watch, share, and create short videos, mainstream media outlets are actively looking for ways to produce short video news, such as Beijing News, Pengpai, CCTV, etc.

Since 2017, short video platforms like Douyin and Quick Worker have incredibly developed, which simultaneously increased the viewers of short video news [3]. For instance, the followers of Pengpai's Douyin account has reached 39 million so far, with an average daily increase of 17 thousand since March 2021, which can demonstrate the huge impact of Pengpai [4]. As for the news media, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been an international hot topic since February 2022 and has drawn a lot of attention due to its huge effects on the world's economy, military, and international relationships. In the early stage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Pengpai published several videos, covering the military, refugees, evacuations, etc., which gained over 1.5 million views on Douyin. Based on this, the study will focus on how Pengpai's Douyin account reported the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Through this study, it can not only understand the attitude of the Chinese government and

the concerns of the Chinese people towards the Russian-Ukrainian conflict but also provide a better reference for Pengpai and other news media to publish related news to increase their attention.

2.   Literature Review

Short video news is a brand-new type of news product that is timed in seconds and often lasts no more than five minutes. They can arouse both the auditory and visual senses and provide a deeply immersive experience for the user [5]. For instance, a world-known short video news site, Newsy, focused on compiling short multidimensional videos of American current events within a few minutes [6]. At the same time, Chinese mainstream media started to explore short video news, with Xinhua News Agency launching the first short video news client in China, "Xinhua 15 Seconds", in 2014 [3]. The mission of the 15 Seconds of Xinhua video was to "make news in the same way as advertising". To eliminate as much unnecessary information as possible, news is presented as "image + caption." It is an innovative method of presentation that offers a new form of journalism by making information dynamic.

Short video news has quickly developed the traditional, consistent pattern of news distribution, which bring in advantages [7]. First, from the perspective of the news producer, short video news lowers the threshold of information production and dissemination and breaks the time and space limitations of news and information dissemination. Next, from the perspective of the audience, short video news enhances interactivity and appeals to the public with the help of H5 and interactive sections [8]. Additionally, in terms of the news style, short video news enriches the style of news; for example, some media use animation instead of traditional forms of text reporting to avoid the use of rigid news scenes and boring verbal texts to present news content [9].

With the rising popularity of short video news, many mainstream media outlets have begun to diversify their content and format. Pengpai has done a remarkable job in this regard. Pengpai is a local news media; it was formerly known as the Oriental Morning Post, a Shanghai-based newspaper. With the development of new media, Pengpai diversified and expanded its channels. Compared to other news media, Pengpai has a relatively high degree of freedom in reporting and focuses more on international events [10]. In addition to that, Pengpai has multiple sources of news and information, mostly from authorities or government agencies, professional news media, and netizens [5].

To conclude, previous research on Pengpai short video news focused on the perspective of short video platforms and short video operations but did not provide enough analysis of short video content. Therefore, this paper will focus on the content of Pengpai short video news to interpret: What are the characteristics of Pengpai short video news on Russia-Ukraine conflict coverage in the early stage?

3.   Methodology

This article chooses Douyin as the case because it is one of the most popular short video platforms in China, with over 500 million active users. Specifically, the article chooses Pengpai as a subject, because firstly, it is a representative of the mainstream media, and secondly, it has a strong influence, with 39.4 million followers on the Douyin platform.

Concerning the selection of sampling methods, the study selected March 1 to March 7, 2022, because this period caused a huge international sensation and was widely concerned by the country, and the people. In terms of statistics, 64 short videos about the Russia-Ukraine conflict have been published on Douyin during this period and the average number of visits remained above ten thousand during this period, in contrast to the 500 to 4,000 visits that followed, reflecting the concentration of audience attention. Based on this, this paper will use a content-analysis approach to

conduct analysis, which is a common analytical method used in journalism and communication to provide an objective, systematic, and quantitative analysis and description of the research sample [11]. Compared to traditional bibliometric methods, content analysis is more useful for delving into the nature of an issue [12]. As for the coding elements, this article constructs five categories, namely news sources, keywords, date, news angle and click rate.

4.   Results

The article consolidates these 64 news items on the Russia-Ukraine conflict to create a pie chart (as shown in Figure 1) and finds that the most-cited news sources reported by Pengpai are from Chinese media, accounting for 31% of the total. This is followed by the Western with 28% of the total number of quotations. Figure 2 revealed that the majority of Chinese and Western sources cited were news media, followed by authorities.
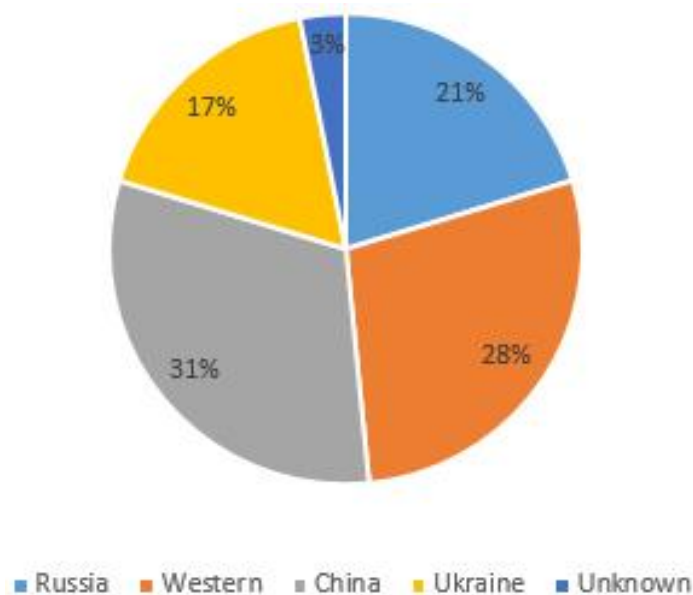

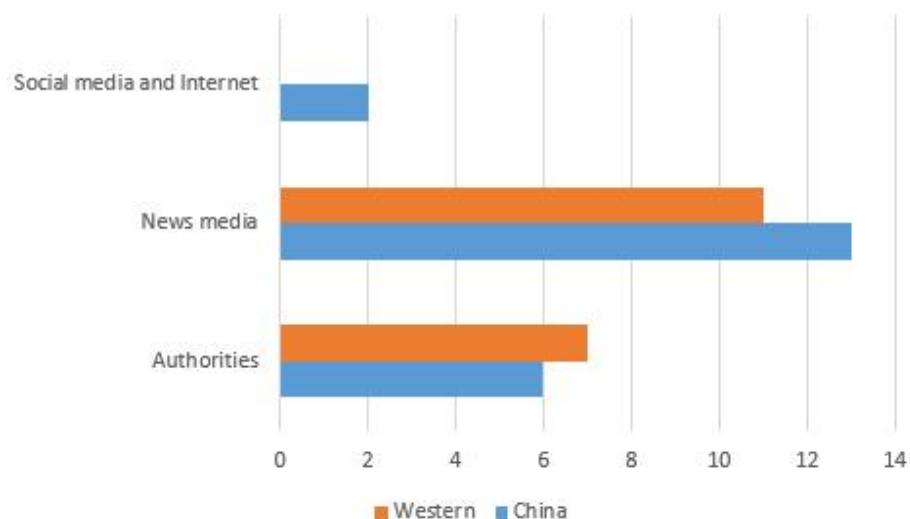Figure 1: Sources of Pengpai based on nation.

Figure 2: Different sources of Pengpai.

Summing up the 64 news keywords for word frequency statistics (Figure 3), Russia-Ukraine negotiations, sanctions, and Chinese evacuation were the top three most frequent occurrences, with 15, 9, and 8 times, respectively. The words EU and silence, although not as frequent, appeared more than once, three times, and twice, respectively. With regard to the news angle, the article's research summary found (Figure 4) that 48 of the 64 short video news stories (75% of the total) were about neutral attitudes, and 16 stories (25% of the total) were about critical attitudes.
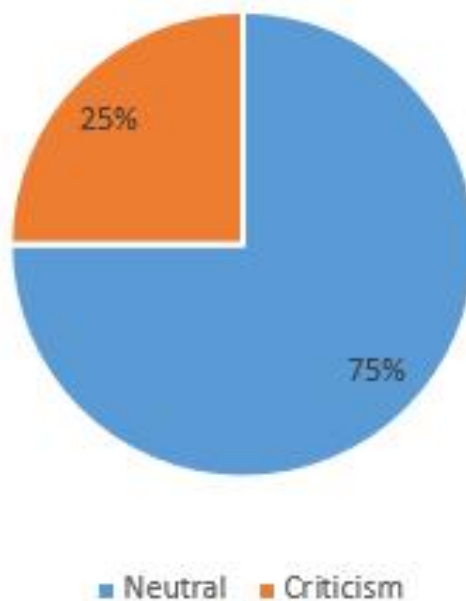

Figure 3: News keywords cloud map.

Figure 4: News angle.

According to the analysis of Figure 5, the click rate for each day from March 1 to March 7 exceeded a hundred thousand, showing a fluctuating upward trend in general, with the highest point on March 7 (The theme of the coverage was peace talks and ceasefire, in line with the audience's expectations for peace), when the click rate was over forty-five thousand. In addition to this, the click rate on March 4 exceeded 43 thousand, placing it in second place.

Figure 5: Click rate per day from March 1 to March 7, 2022.

5. Discussion

As a representative of the mainstream media, Pengpai cites Chinese news sources most frequently in its coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, the reason being that Chinese news sources are more trustworthy than those from social media. The second most cited source after China is Western news sources, with the news media also in the top spot, due to the long history of Western media outlets such as the BBC or Forbes, which have a strong international reputation and report more timely and factual news. In contrast, Pengpai cites fewer sources from Russia and Ukraine, the main reason being that news information from both sides during the Russia-Ukraine conflict is more subjective and biased. The lack of authority of the news media in both countries has led to information and opinion positions in both countries being flooded with fake news.

The statistics and reporting tendencies through the keyword cloud chart can be seen in the fact that the reports of the Pengpai, as a Chinese mainstream media, follow the official statement of the Chinese Foreign Ministry on the Russia-Ukraine conflict: to remain neutral between the two sides, hoping to see a peaceful negotiated settlement between the two countries, but at the same time criticizing the absurd sanctions and suppression of Russian art and animals by the West. China has always insisted on dialogue and negotiation to solve problems and opposes the provision of military weapons to arch fire. In addition to this, the frequency of the word evacuation in the keyword cloud statistics shows the Chinese state's commitment to the safety of its citizens' lives and putting the people at heart. China's evacuation of overseas Chinese is a reflection of China's "warm strength", and the relevant reports can inspire people with a strong sense of patriotism.

An analysis of the news reports on March 7, item by item, reveals that there were four videos with more than ten thousand clicks on this day. The summary keywords are no longer joining NATO, silence, evacuation, and ceasefire, and an analysis of the reasons for this shows that evacuation is the third most frequent keyword, while the remaining three words are the attitude of the Chinese state and the tendency of the news media to report on it. As citizens, most Chinese

people will think in terms of the country, with the national interest as the main concern. Therefore, the other three videos have over a ten thousand click rate.

6.   Conclusion

This study describes the characteristics of Pengpai's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Firstly, Pengpai reflects its professionalism by citing more Chinese citation sources, especially the news media. Besides, its news content is very adequate; it has information from both social media and the news media, reflecting the diversity of its sources. Then, the national policy can be seen in the keywords and news angle: the call for peace and putting people first, especially in the report on March 7. Additionally, In the early days of short-video news, it took the form of "caption + image," which was basically 15 seconds or less. This paper only conducts simple research on the early stage of the outbreak, which focuses on March 1 to March 7. Future research will focus more on the comparative study of the content of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and extend the time dimension.

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