

# The Homogenization Dilemma and Differentiated Communication Paths of Self-Media Short Videos

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**Abstract.** After the self-media short video industry experienced explosive growth, the homogenization of its content has become increasingly prominent, emerging as a key bottleneck restricting the healthy development of the industry. Based on a review of existing research, this paper analyzes the manifestations and underlying causes of the homogenization dilemma in self-media short videos, and explores effective differentiated communication paths from dimensions such as content verticalization, local cultural excavation, narrative innovation, and technological empowerment. The findings reveal that to break away from the homogenization trap, creators need to build distinct value positioning, organically integrating cultural roots, professional competence, and technological innovation to achieve sustainable development in the fierce competition for traffic.

**Keywords:** self-media short videos, homogenization, differentiated communication, content innovation

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the short video industry has undergone a transition from nascent emergence to explosive growth, becoming a mainstream form of information dissemination and cultural consumption. However, as market saturation increases, the field of self-media short videos has encountered a serious problem of homogenization. From plot duplication and script plagiarism to trend following and formulaic presentation, massive content falls into the predicament of "uniformity across countless accounts" [1]. Lei Qingwen points out that the homogenized communication of short video marketing in the self-media era has become a core issue demanding urgent resolution, which not only weakens users' viewing experience but also undermines the long-term value of content creators [1].

Facing this dilemma, how to achieve differentiated communication has become a common focus of academic and industry attention. This paper intends to systematically examine the manifestations and root causes of the homogenization dilemma plaguing self-media short videos, and explore feasible differentiated communication paths by combining relevant theories with real cases, so as to offer valuable references for self-media content creators.

## 2. In-depth analysis of the homogenization dilemma in self-media short videos

### 2.1. Manifestations of homogenization

The homogenization phenomenon in self-media short videos manifests in multiple dimensions. In terms of content themes, once a topic receives high traffic, a large number of creators rush to imitate, forming a "hot trend following" pattern. In narrative modes, formulaic techniques such as "golden three seconds," "plot twists," and "emotional tear-jerking" are repeatedly applied, leading to user aesthetic fatigue. At the visual presentation level, similar beauty filters, templated editing, and identical BGM choices greatly reduce the distinctiveness of different accounts [2]. Feng Wanhong's research indicates that the imitation-replication-homogenization cycle has become a typical feature of content production in self-media short videos [2].

### 2.2. Analysis of the causes of homogenization

Interest-driven and traffic logic. The algorithmic recommendation mechanisms of short video platforms naturally favor content with high interaction rates, which encourages creators to prioritize "hit models" validated by the market rather than taking risks with original exploration. Lu Xiaoxiao and Gan Suhao argue that while the 5G era offers faster transmission speeds and lower entry barriers for the short video industry, it also intensifies the trend of large-scale content replication, as creators' innovative motivation is constrained by traffic-driven operational pressure [3].

Limitations in creative capability and resources. The "low threshold" characteristic of self-media has attracted a large number of non-professional creators, who generally lack systematic content production capabilities and unique value reserves, and can only gain attention by imitating others' successful paths. Feng Wanhong's research reveals that many self-media creators lack adequate resources and capacity to continuously produce high-quality original content, which constitutes a key internal driving factor behind the homogenization dilemma [2].

Lag in platform governance. Although major platforms have successively launched copyright protection and original content incentive schemes, the definition and penalty for plagiarism and content piracy remain ambiguous and hard to enforce. Zhang Wenting, in discussing the ecology of science popularization short videos, points out that the imperfection of platform governance mechanisms allows the phenomenon of "bad money driving out good" to occur frequently, and the rights and interests of original creators are not effectively protected [4].

## 3. Theoretical basis and practical paths for differentiated communication

The core of differentiated communication lies in establishing a unique value proposition and distinctiveness, enabling content to stand out in the ocean of information. Based on a synthesis of existing studies, this paper explores the issue from the following four dimensions.

### 3.1. Deepening vertical fields to build professional barriers

In a highly homogenized market environment, professionalization and verticalization are key directions for breaking through. Creators need to abandon the inertia of "pan-entertainment" thinking and establish in-depth cognitive and professional advantages in a specific niche. Ma Minqi's research on doctor self-media short videos shows that professional, information-dense, and credible medical content tends to achieve more stable user stickiness and communication effects [5]. Such professional identity of medical practitioners itself

constitutes a core differentiated resource, suggesting that self-media creators in other fields should explore their unique professional knowledge and skill reserves to build inimitable competitive barriers.

Yu Yue's research further confirms this view. The study, focusing on mainstream media's Douyin accounts, analyzed the paths of public opinion guidance during emergencies, finding that content with authoritative sources and professional analytical frameworks holds an irreplaceable position in an environment of information overload [6]. For self-media creators, even without the institutional authority of mainstream media, in-depth and long-term cultivation in a specific niche can accumulate users' trust and recognition, thereby forming unique differentiated competitive edges.

### 3.2. Excavating local culture to form distinctive identifiers

Localization and regionalization represent another important path for differentiated communication. Chen Yue's in-depth analysis of the social media short video dissemination of Pengshui Miao folk songs found that creatively combining ethnic minority cultural elements with short videos not only showcases unique regional landscapes but also stimulates users' cultural identity and travel aspirations, thus achieving dual value in cultural dissemination and cultural tourism promotion [7]. This case indicates that creators can draw on local intangible cultural heritage, folk activities, dialectal characteristics, and food culture, transforming "locality" into a unique selling point of their content.

In fact, the dissemination of local culture through short videos is not only a differentiation strategy but also carries significant value for cultural preservation. Amid trends of globalization and standardization, short video content rooted in local contexts and showcasing unique regional characteristics instead gains more attention due to its scarcity. Creators should abandon blind pursuit of "nationwide hits" and instead consider what irreplaceable narrative resources their own cultural roots can provide.

### 3.3. Innovating narrative methods to reconstruct expression logic

Narrative innovation is a core means of breaking free from homogenization. Currently, a large number of short videos employ highly similar narrative frameworks, and users' expectations have been conditioned by highly formulaic content – yet this also means that any attempt to break conventions can achieve significant differentiation effects. Wang Tao, in discussing strategies for the international dissemination of short videos, points out that the ability to tell a good story is far more important than imitating hit formats, and innovation in narrative structure and uniqueness in emotional connection are key factors in crossing cultural barriers [8].

Specifically, creators can innovate in narrative perspectives, narrative rhythms, and interactive approaches. For example, using a first-person subjective perspective instead of the common observer perspective, employing suspense and pacing changes to break the "three-segment formula," or designing user-participatory open endings. These innovations may seem minor, but cumulatively they can form a distinct personal style. Wang Tao emphasizes that successful differentiation does not lie in deliberate unconventionality but in finding the most appropriate expressive method for one's content style, based on an understanding of media characteristics [8].

### 3.4. Embracing technological empowerment to enhance content quality

Advancements in technological conditions provide new possibilities for differentiated communication. Lu Xiaoxiao and Gan Suhao analyze that the high speed and low latency of the 5G era make new forms such as ultra-high-definition video, VR/AR interactive content, and real-time live streaming possible, providing short video creators with richer expressive means [3]. Those creators who are able to take the lead in mastering and

applying new technologies can often distinguish themselves from ordinary creators in visual experience and technical quality.

Zhang Wenting's research on the ecological reconstruction of popular science short videos yields similar findings. The study suggests that as platform governance improves and user aesthetic standards rise, the crude model of gaining traffic solely through sensational or emotional content will become unsustainable, and refinement and technological sophistication are inevitable trends in future short video development [4]. Technological empowerment entails not only the upgrading of shooting and editing equipment, but also the understanding and application of data tools and algorithmic recommendation mechanisms. Creators should transform from "technology followers" to "technology users," letting technology serve the expression of content uniqueness rather than being passively shaped by algorithms.

## 4. Comprehensive discussion and recommendations

### 4.1. Differentiation as a systematic project

It should be noted that the four differentiation paths above are not independent choices but rather mutually supportive components of a systematic project requiring coordinated advancement. A successful differentiation strategy often involves multiple dimensions simultaneously, including niche positioning, cultural mining, narrative innovation, and technological application. For example, in the case of Pengshui Miao folk songs studied by Chen Yue, local culture is the soul of the content, while creative short video production is the form of presentation – neither can be absent [7]. Similarly, the differentiated advantage of doctor self-media stems not only from their professional identity but also from their grasp of the laws of short video dissemination [5].

### 4.2. The relationship between differentiation and platform ecology

Differentiated communication also requires consideration of platform ecology influences. Yu Yue's research suggests that different platforms have distinct user profiles, algorithmic mechanisms, and community cultures; creators should adapt their differentiation strategies according to platform characteristics, rather than simply engaging in "one-click multi-platform distribution" [6]. For example, Douyin's entertainment-oriented attributes and WeChat Channels' relationship-chain-driven communication logic have completely different requirements for content formats, and a differentiation strategy effective on one platform may be unsuitable for another.

Zheng Hao's study on food safety rumor-debunking short videos from the perspective of activity theory provides a valuable analytical framework for understanding this issue. The research notes that communication behavior is embedded in a specific social activity system, and the effectiveness of a differentiation strategy depends on its degree of fit with various elements of that system (rules, community, division of labor, etc.) [9]. This perspective suggests that differentiation is not an isolated textual strategy but a process of selecting and constructing an ecological niche for communication.

### 4.3. Practical recommendations for self-media creators

Based on the above analysis, this paper offers the following recommendations for self-media creators: First, conduct an accurate self-assessment to clarify one's core resources and capability boundaries, and then choose a differentiated content niche based on this. Second, resist the temptation of short-term traffic and establish a long-term creative philosophy, prioritizing content quality and user trust. Third, remain sensitive to technological and platform developments, but always base their practices on content value, avoiding the

pitfalls of "technology-centric" or "algorithm-centric" approaches. Fourth, value cultural roots and local resources; content that is truly grounded often possesses lasting vitality.

## 5. Conclusion

The homogenization dilemma of self-media short videos is an inevitable outcome of the industry's extensive development phase, and it also serves as a necessary threshold to overcome for the industry to move toward maturity and refinement. Based on existing research findings, this paper analyzes the causes of homogenization from dimensions such as interest-driven factors, capability limitations, and governance lags, and proposes four differentiation paths: deepening vertical fields, excavating local culture, innovating narrative methods, and embracing technological empowerment. The research demonstrates that true differentiation is not a minor adjustment to hit formats but the discovery and adherence to one's unique value as a creator.

Future research could further explore the relationship between differentiation strategies and commercialization, the distribution biases of platform algorithms toward differentiated content, and the role of MCN institutions in promoting or inhibiting differentiation. As Wang Tao argues, the healthy development of short videos requires the joint efforts of creators, platforms, and users to form a content ecology that encourages originality, tolerates diversity, and respects pluralism.

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