



The Attention Economy as a High-speed Game: Traffic Capture through Entertainment Event Marketing on Short Video Platforms

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Abstract. In an era marked by information explosion and rapid advances in internet technologies, the attention economy has emerged as a dominant paradigm, with attention becoming a critical resource in the new digital economy. Short video platforms, driven by personalized recommendation algorithms and interactive social features, have adopted “traffic is king” as their core strategic principle. These platforms increasingly rely on entertainment event marketing to compete for user attention. However, in the context of fierce competition, they face mounting challenges such as fragmented user attention and severe content homogenization. Consequently, how to effectively capture and continuously convert traffic has become an urgent issue requiring systematic study. Based on an analysis of attention economy theory, platform operation mechanisms, and existing research on entertainment event marketing, this paper investigates the current landscape of entertainment event marketing on short video platforms. It examines the challenges of diminished user attention, content redundancy, and emotional fatigue. Furthermore, the study explores the role of entertainment event marketing in promoting user engagement and platform stickiness, and proposes traffic capture strategies including hotspot tracking, content innovation, and multi-channel integration. The findings aim to provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for enhancing the traffic competitiveness of short video platforms.

Keywords: Attention Economy, Short Video Platforms, Entertainment Event Marketing, Traffic Capture.

1 Introduction

In the era of digitalization characterized by an information explosion, attention has become a scarce yet crucial economic resource. Short video platforms have rapidly risen to prominence due to their fragmented content formats and high interactivity, emerging as central hubs for user engagement. To stand out in a highly competitive market, these platforms have adopted entertainment event marketing as a core strategy to attract traffic, making use of the viral nature of celebrity scandals, variety show topics, film and television trends, and other media events to capture fragments of limited user attention. However, the increasing fragmentation of user attention and the growing homogenization of content, compounded by emotional fatigue induced by excessive marketing,

have posed significant challenges for short video platforms in both acquiring and retaining user traffic. Against this backdrop, the present paper conducts an in-depth investigation into the strategies employed by short video platforms to capture traffic through entertainment events within the framework of the attention economy. By analyzing the current landscape, inherent dilemmas, and broader impacts, this study aims to enhance platform competitiveness and support sustainable development.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Attention Economy

The attention economy is centered on treating attention as a scarce resource. In the age of information explosion, the supply of information has far surpassed individuals' cognitive processing capacity, rendering attention a critical resource in the new economic era. As internet technologies evolve, the acquisition and allocation of user attention have become increasingly dependent on algorithmic recommendation mechanisms integrated into platform design and algorithms. Under this theoretical framework, platforms adopt various strategies to attract user attention, promote information dissemination, and ultimately achieve commercial conversion.

2.2 Operational Mechanism of Short Video Platforms

The content operation mechanism of short video platforms is largely shaped by personalized recommendation algorithms. These algorithms conduct in-depth analyses of users' behavioral data to accurately predict their interests and deliver relevant content, thereby significantly enhancing user stickiness. Platforms stimulate user engagement through social interaction functions such as likes, comments, and shares, fostering a sense of community and increasing user activity. Within this mechanism, the notion that "traffic is king" has become the core development strategy. Through refined traffic allocation and cyclic traffic logic, platforms strive to capture as much user attention as possible in an environment where attention is limited.

2.3 Research on Entertainment Event Marketing

Event marketing, as a strategic marketing approach, aims to stimulate public emotional responses by creating or leveraging trending events to boost brand awareness or achieve promotional goals (Kotler et al.). On short video platforms, the lifecycle of entertainment events typically progresses from event emergence to rapid topic dissemination, followed by gradual decline. Entertainment topics often exhibit emotional resonance—evoking users' emotional reactions such as empathy, excitement, anger, or curiosity through content or interaction, thereby fostering emotional connections. This leads to topic transformation—converting attention generated by emotional resonance into specific discussions or calls to action, guiding users toward community-related behaviors such as purchasing, sharing, or content creation. The final stage is community fission—

where spontaneous user-driven dissemination leads to exponential growth of the community. This process is driven by the concepts of “social currency” and “altruistic psychology”, both of which encourage sharing and strengthen emotional resonance. Although platforms can leverage entertainment events to generate short-term surges in traffic, how to sustain such traffic, avoid excessive emotional manipulation, and mitigate user fatigue remain key challenges that platforms must confront.

3 Analysis of the Current State of Entertainment Event Marketing on Short Video Platforms

3.1 Types and Characteristics of Entertainment Events

Entertainment events on short video platforms exhibit a wide variety of types, among which have remained a major attraction for user attention. Celebrities, backed by large fan bases and significant popularity, tend to draw intense public discussion with nearly every action they take. For instance, when a celebrity’s romantic involvement is exposed, it can immediately trigger a surge in video views—reaching millions within a short time—and rapidly push the topic onto trending lists. Both fans and the general public engage in heated discussions, driven by emotional resonance. Fans are motivated by their attachment to idols, while public attention is often sparked by curiosity, allowing such scandals to spread rapidly [1].

Variety show topics also maintain high popularity. With the widespread success of various variety programs, highlights and guest interactions are often edited into short videos for broad dissemination. For example, in talent competition shows, elimination segments—characterized by intense atmosphere and genuine emotional expressions—easily evoke audience resonance. This leads to active user engagement through likes and shares. Such topics are characterized by continuity, as they can consistently generate new content and maintain user interest throughout the duration of a program’s broadcast cycle.

Film and television-related topics constitute another important category. Short videos featuring trailers or compelling clips from movies and TV series serve as both pre-release promotional tools and post-release engagement boosters [2]. For instance, after the launch of a popular xianxia drama, iconic scenes from the show—presented as short videos—captured the attention of a wide audience. Leveraging the influence of well-known film and television IPs, these videos effectively reached targeted viewers and stimulated deeper engagement and discussion around the content.

3.2 Current Landscape of Traffic Competition among Platforms

The short video platform market is marked by fierce competition. Leading platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou dominate a significant share of the market, leveraging their vast user bases and powerful algorithmic recommendation systems. According to data from QuestMobile, as of December 2024, Douyin reported 780 million monthly active users, while Kuaishou reached 450 million. In light of the scarcity of user atten-

tion and traffic, platforms have actively deployed entertainment event marketing strategies to compete for visibility and engagement [3]. Douyin has capitalized on its close collaborations with major film production companies and variety show programs to gain access to exclusive entertainment content. For example, when a blockbuster film is released, Douyin often launches exclusive behind-the-scenes short videos, attracting substantial attention from fans. The platform leverages celebrity influence and topic heat to achieve rapid traffic growth. Kuaishou, in contrast, focuses on generating unique entertainment topics and draws on its strong “laotie” culture—a community-driven ethos rooted in mutual support—to encourage users to share creative content related to entertainment. This approach enhances both user engagement and loyalty. Emerging short video platforms are also striving to establish a presence in the market by adopting differentiated competition strategies. Some platforms specialize in niche entertainment domains and host distinctive events to attract targeted user segments. For instance, a platform dedicated to ACG (animation, comics, and games) culture organized a cosplay contest featuring anime characters to attract fans from specific subcultures and capture a share of the segmented market. Overall, platforms continue to innovate in their approaches to entertainment event marketing, with competition becoming increasingly intense. Each seeks to secure an advantageous position in the ongoing battle for user traffic.

4 Dilemmas and Challenges in Capturing Traffic from Entertainment Events under the Logic of the Attention Economy

4.1 Increasing User Attention Fragmentation and Acquisition Difficulty

In the attention economy era, the diversification of information dissemination channels and the exponential growth of content have led to an increasingly pronounced fragmentation of user attention. Research indicates that the volume of information encountered by users on a daily basis has multiplied, with short video platforms, social media, and news outlets all vying for the same limited pool of user attention. The duration of user attention has significantly declined; the average viewing time per session on short video platforms has dropped from several minutes to only several tens of seconds [4]. For short video platforms, although entertainment events can spark short-term interest, they struggle to sustain long-term user engagement. Users tend to switch rapidly between platforms—for instance, viewing a celebrity scandal video on Douyin, followed by browsing variety topics on Kuaishou to browse variety show topics [5]. Additionally, the presence of diverse content types such as educational videos and daily life sharing further disperses attention. The over-insertion of advertisements and disruptive pop-up windows exacerbates this fragmentation, making it increasingly difficult for platforms to effectively capture and retain user attention through entertainment events.

4.2 Fierce Competition and Content Homogenization

Amid the booming development of the short video industry, a massive influx of creators and content production agencies has led to increasingly severe content homogenization, particularly in the domain of entertainment events. In the case of celebrity scandals and variety show topics, content across various platforms tends to converge significantly in form and substance [6]. When a celebrity scandal breaks, many short video creators repeatedly produce content focusing on the event's background and speculated causes, often lacking in-depth analysis or unique perspectives. In terms of production style, most entertainment event short videos follow a standardized format of "event narration plus commentary", usually consisting of edited news clips with added commentary by the creator. Such uniformity reflects a lack of innovation. Under the pressure of traffic competition, content producers frequently imitate high-performing videos, resulting in a proliferation of similar material across platforms. Statistical data indicate that during the broadcast of a popular variety program, over 60% of short videos related to the show exhibited repetitive content. This content homogenization not only reduces the quality of the user experience, but also undermines the platforms' differentiated competitive advantage. It contributes to audience fatigue and ultimately impairs both traffic acquisition and user retention.

4.3 Emotional Fatigue and Risk of User Aversion

Short video platforms frequently rely on triggering users' emotional responses to market entertainment events. However, excessive emotional stimulation may lead to emotional fatigue and even aversion. Some content creators deliberately exaggerate facts, provoke disputes, or spread misinformation in order to attract attention. During the dissemination of celebrity scandals, fabricated or misleading narratives can spark fan conflicts, infringe upon the rights of those involved, and create friction between users and entertainment content. The constant promotion of entertainment events results in an overwhelming presence of entertainment-related information in users' feeds, contributing to information overload and emotional exhaustion. Studies have shown that when users are exposed to a high volume of entertainment short videos each day, their interest and willingness to engage with such content decline significantly [7]. Users may gradually develop resistance toward platforms that excessively rely on entertainment events as a primary traffic strategy. If platforms persistently neglect the promotion of high-quality and diverse content, they risk being labeled as "overly entertainment-oriented" or even "vulgar". The resulting decline in user favorability and loyalty may ultimately lead to user attrition and pose a threat to the long-term sustainability of the platform [8].

5 Impact of Entertainment Event Marketing on User Engagement and Platform Stickiness

5.1 Analysis of User Engagement Behavior

User engagement behaviors within entertainment event marketing on short video platforms exhibit considerable diversity, driven by a variety of underlying motivations. In terms of interactive behavior, the most common forms include likes, comments, and shares. Users typically like videos related to entertainment events when the content aligns with their personal interests or values—for instance, expressing support for celebrities involved in positive or inspirational incidents. Commenting behavior is often motivated by a desire to share opinions, express emotions, or seek resonance with others, such as discussing plot developments or character portrayals under trending film and television topics. Sharing behavior is largely driven by social signaling and information dissemination purposes, as users aim to showcase their personal taste or share valuable content with friends. Some users also engage in secondary content creation around entertainment events, such as producing humorous imitation videos or in-depth analytical content. Their motivations include self-expression, gaining attention, and integrating into online communities. For example, in celebrity imitation short videos, creators mimic the speech and mannerisms of celebrities to showcase their own talents, attract likes and followers, and embed themselves within specific fan communities—thereby fulfilling their social interaction needs. Platform-driven incentive mechanisms, such as traffic boosts and monetary rewards, further stimulate user creativity and enthusiasm. These mechanisms enhance the circulation and viral spread of entertainment events within the platform ecosystem.

5.2 Factors Influencing Platform Stickiness

Entertainment event marketing exerts a significant influence on key indicators of platform stickiness, such as user retention and usage frequency, which are shaped by a combination of factors. The popularity and topicality of events are particularly crucial. Highly visible and controversial entertainment events—such as major incidents involving top-tier celebrities or viral moments from hit variety shows—tend to continuously capture user attention, encouraging frequent visits to the platform to stay updated, thereby increasing usage frequency. The platform's operational strategies regarding entertainment events also play a pivotal role in enhancing stickiness. When a platform delivers timely recommendations, provides diverse interpretations of content, and facilitates interactive activities such as topic discussions and user polls, it effectively strengthens user engagement and boosts retention rates. Users' experiences of participating in entertainment event marketing are directly correlated with their attachment to the platform [9]. When users feel respected and recognized through mechanisms such as interactive feedback and content creation opportunities, they are more likely to continue using the platform. For instance, the platform's practices of featuring high-quality comments or officially recommending outstanding creators can foster a sense of be-

longing and achievement, thereby enhancing platform stickiness. Conversely, excessive marketing, shallow content, and a poorly managed interactive environment may degrade user experience and lead to attrition. If users perceive the platform as lacking in content depth or over-reliant on sensationalism, their loyalty may decline, ultimately affecting the platform's sustainability.

5.3 Case Analysis

A representative example is Douyin's use of celebrity livestreaming for product promotion, which has attracted significant attention from both devoted fans and general users. In terms of user participation, viewers can show support for their favorite celebrities by liking and commenting during live sessions, sharing the livestream links with friends, or even producing humorous secondary content from memorable livestream moments for further dissemination. This high level of engagement stems from users' emotional attachment to the celebrities and their anticipation of exclusive promotional deals. From the perspective of platform stickiness, Douyin leverages the celebrity effect not only to drive traffic spikes during live broadcasts, but more importantly, to retain users' attention through follow-up strategies such as replays of highlight clips and frequent updates on celebrity activities. These practices contribute to increasing user retention and frequency of use. Another example is Kuaishou's "Nationwide Variety Show Tracking" initiative, which encouraged users to create content centered on trending variety shows. Users actively participated by producing humorous edits and dramatic reenactments in the form of short videos. The platform boosted this wave of content creation by launching topic-based challenges and offering traffic-based incentives, thereby cultivating an engaging community atmosphere. According to official statistics from Kuaishou, the themed content under this campaign exceeded 10 billion views, with a significant rise in daily user time and newly registered users. These cases illustrate that well-executed entertainment event marketing, when paired with effective platform operation strategies, can substantially enhance user participation and platform stickiness, achieving a mutually beneficial outcome in both traffic acquisition and user retention.

6 Strategies for Capturing Traffic from Entertainment Events under the Logic of the Attention Economy

6.1 Hotspot Tracking and Rapid Response Mechanism

To effectively capture traffic from entertainment events, platforms must leverage big data and artificial intelligence technologies to conduct real-time monitoring of online dynamics. By deploying web crawler technologies to extract trending information from platforms such as Weibo Hot Search, Baidu Index, and news portals, and applying natural language processing algorithms to analyze topic popularity and trends, platforms can accurately identify potential entertainment hotspots. For instance, Douyin's hotspot monitoring system can perform real-time parsing of user search keywords and video content. When early signs emerge—such as celebrity activity or film trailer releases—

the system can promptly detect and capture them. Platforms should establish a dedicated team of professionals specializing in hotspot operations. Once a hotspot is confirmed, content planning, script writing, and video production should be completed within 24 hours. Through pre-coordination with production teams, platforms can obtain exclusive materials at the time of broadcast and quickly edit compelling content aligned with the trending topic, ensuring immediate delivery to users. By employing templated content production tools, platforms can reduce the barriers to content creation, encouraging ordinary users to participate in the generation of trending materials. This facilitates the construction of a content matrix characterized by “official guidance plus mass participation”, enabling rapid inflow and viral dissemination of traffic.

6.2 Content Creativity and Format Innovation

To overcome the dilemma of content homogenization and effectively capture user attention, short video platforms must continuously innovate in both content creation and presentation formats. From a content perspective, platforms should encourage creators to explore the deeper value of entertainment events and avoid superficial storytelling. For example, when addressing celebrity philanthropy, creators should not only report on the event’s progression but also delve into the underlying social significance, thereby eliciting emotional resonance from users. In the case of popular film and television topics, content can be enriched through interpretive perspectives such as narrative metaphors or character development arcs, catering to users’ growing demand for high-quality content. Incorporating immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can make the viewing experience more immersive and engaging. For instance, VR can simulate the experience of attending a celebrity concert in person. Interactive video formats that allow users to influence the direction of storylines further strengthen user engagement by transforming viewers into participants. Platforms such as Xiaohongshu have adopted diverse strategies in their entertainment event marketing. One example is the short video series “Celebrity-Endorsed Product Reviews”, which combines photo-text notes with livestreaming to present multi-dimensional content related to entertainment events, thereby significantly enhancing dissemination effectiveness. Moreover, platforms can stimulate user creativity by organizing innovative challenge activities. For instance, Douyin’s “Film Character Imitation Challenge” has attracted widespread participation, generating a ripple effect of user engagement and viral sharing.

6.3 Multi-Channel Integration and Social Viral Dissemination

To facilitate the viral spread of entertainment event content, short video platforms must integrate multiple communication channels, including social media and key opinion leaders (KOLs), to establish a multi-channel dissemination framework. In terms of social media integration, platforms can forge cooperative relationships with Weibo and WeChat to enable cross-platform content distribution. For example, when Douyin releases promotional videos for a celebrity’s new project, it concurrently initiates topic discussions on Weibo, leveraging the platform’s trending topic mechanism to amplify the event’s influence. In parallel, WeChat official accounts can push in-depth analytical

articles, directing users back to the short video platform for further engagement. By aligning with the characteristics of entertainment events, platforms can construct a tiered dissemination matrix involving top-tier, mid-tier, and grassroots KOLs. Top-tier KOLs leverage their large fan bases to attract initial attention; mid-tier KOLs enhance influence through professional and analytical content; and grassroots KOLs, by offering relatable perspectives, increase user affinity and content approachability. For instance, Bilibili promotes trending variety shows by engaging content creators from different domains—such as film review and comedy channels—to produce secondary content. These creators provide humorous commentary and narrative analysis, enabling multi-dimensional interpretation of the program and facilitating content diffusion across sub-cultures. In addition, platforms can implement social sharing incentive mechanisms, such as offering virtual items or traffic coupons for sharing videos. These strategies encourage users to actively disseminate content through their social networks, enabling viral propagation of entertainment events and enhancing both traffic and platform stickiness. In conclusion, platforms can efficiently attract and sustain user traffic by adopting strategies like hotspot monitoring, innovative content creation, and multi-channel integration [10].

7 Conclusion

In the era of the attention economy, short video platforms utilize entertainment event marketing as a means to capture user traffic, yet they face multiple challenges in the process. Fragmented user attention, content homogenization, and emotional fatigue hinder the effective acquisition and conversion of traffic generated by entertainment events. Nevertheless, well-executed entertainment event marketing can positively contribute to enhancing user engagement and platform stickiness.

By implementing strategies such as hotspot tracking, content innovation, and multi-channel integration, platforms can effectively capture and continuously convert traffic. In the future, short video platforms should continue refining their strategies and balance entertainment appeal with content depth in order to strengthen their competitive edge in traffic acquisition and achieve long-term sustainable development.

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