

Why Short-Form Video Apps Are So Popular in China

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Short-form video apps arrived in China in early 2017 and have established themselves as viable entertainment options, allowing users to create content in 15- and 60-second spurts. In fact, we estimate that average daily time spent with short-form video among mobile internet users has risen from 9.9% of total mobile internet time in Q3 2018 to 13.5% in Q2 2019. Meanwhile, time spent on over-the-top (OTT) apps experienced a slight decline.

Average Daily Time Spent on Mobile Apps in China, by Type, Q3 2018-Q2 2019

hours and % of total

	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
Type of app (% of total)				
Instant messaging	31.0%	28.3%	29.8%	30.6%
Short-form video	9.9%	11.7%	12.3%	13.5%
Video-on-demand/over-the-top	12.5%	12.0%	10.9%	10.7%
News (general)	8.6%	9.0%	9.0%	7.9%
Gaming	8.0%	7.9%	7.0%	7.2%
Mcommerce (general)	3.1%	3.3%	3.8%	4.0%
Reading/ebooks	3.4%	3.5%	3.6%	3.8%
Browser	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	3.4%
Other	19.4%	20.4%	19.8%	18.9%
Type of app (hours per day)				
Instant messaging	1.30	1.25	1.28	1.44
Short-form video	0.42	0.51	0.53	0.63
Video-on-demand/over-the-top	0.53	0.53	0.47	0.50
News (general)	0.36	0.40	0.39	0.37
Gaming	0.34	0.35	0.30	0.34
Mcommerce (general)	0.13	0.15	0.16	0.19
Reading/ebooks	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.18
Browser	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.16
Other	0.81	0.90	0.85	0.89
Total	4.20	4.40	4.30	4.70

Note: represents activity in the Jiguang (Aurora Mobile) network, broader industry metrics may vary; via smartphones and tablets

Source: Jiguang (Aurora Mobile), "Q2 2019 Mobile Internet Industry Data Research Report;" eMarketer calculations, Aug 15, 2019

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Why are short-form video apps so popular? We took a look at this for our latest report on digital video in China and spoke with Annie He, global PR manager of Kuaishou Technology, a Beijing-based short-video platform.

She told us that she believes short-form video and OTT video streaming are becoming increasingly complementary: "The rise of short video hasn't really disrupted other types of video, as consumption of long-form content is still prevalent. The short form, however, provides a new choice for users and fits a person's quick pace of life."

Marketers in China have come to regard short-form video apps as an ideal environment to interact with consumers and an effective advertising platform. Short-form videos in China attracted \$2.1 billion worth of ads in 2018, according to a June 2019 Forrester Research report. This amount is forecast to grow more than threefold to \$6.5 billion by 2023.

According to a Trend Consulting survey, short-form video app users opened their apps an average of seven times daily in 2018. Usage was especially heavy during lunch, after work during the evenings at home, and right before bed. Not only are short-video viewers consuming more content, but they are highly engaged on the platform—93.0% liked the content, 84.5% commented, and 90.6% shared a video, according to the survey.

With the exception of Alibaba, China’s largest digital giants, including ByteDance, Baidu and Tencent, have entered the short-video space—the clear winners as of June 2019 were ByteDance’s Douyin (international version of TikTok) and Kuaishou, according to data from QuestMobile.

Taking a closer look at the age breakdown of Douyin and Kuaishou users in China, iiMedia Research found in January 2019 that over half of users were 24 or younger. And on both platforms, those under 35 made up more than 85%.

Douyin has been the undisputed leader in the short-form video space since it entered the market less than three years ago with its signature watermark filters, music selection and sophisticated video-editing tools. The app has become synonymous with hip urban culture in China.

Kuaishou, however, has a “humbler” base of lower-tier cities and rural areas, with users uploading silly stunts to impress their peers and farmers proudly displaying their produce. Kuaishou has recently launched a number of new initiatives designed to attract more users, including acquiring top content creators and key opinion leaders (KOLs). It has also enhanced its group chat functionality.

Douyin and Kuaishou are both testing video clips as long as 15 and 10 minutes, respectively, which is a departure from their short-form roots. Currently, Kuaishou users’ default video length is up to 57 seconds. The platforms hope that the longer formats will help boost user engagement by providing room for more creativity.

For more on digital video trends happening in China, read our report.

Report by Man-Chung Cheung Sep 19, 2019

China Digital Video 2019



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