

RUNNING HEAD: To Produce Video or Not to Produce Video. That Is the Question.

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Analyzing the Efficacy of Video Media as a Tool in Digital PR Marketing

Nerys Muller

Department of Journalism, Media Studies, and Public Relations, Hofstra University

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## Introduction

Public relations (PR), as defined by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), involves the strategic management of communication between an organization and its stakeholders intending to create and maintain a positive reputation for the organization (PRSA & IPRA, 2023). The way practitioners approach PR in today's new digital age has shifted significantly throughout the 21st century with the development and utilization of video media content as a connective and essential communication medium for PR professionals and their audiences. As I will define for this essay, video media content refers to short-form media's use of visual elements such as moving images, animations, and video footage. Similarly, content creation, a parallel term, incorporates these elements into various forms of media as a communication medium for brand and influencer promotions and messaging.

In 2023, the public relations environment has become increasingly reliant on social media platforms to disseminate information and connect with core audiences. With society's drastic shift to an almost entirely online world in the new era of digital advancements and technological innovation, visual media (namely videos) have become crucial in communicating complex information to an organization's target demographic. Clapperton (2023) suggests video media content has been a successful approach by which companies increase brand recognition and customer loyalty via social platforms. My research seeks to assess video media content's impact on social media content marketing. Here, I'll be examining the effectiveness of video media content implementation in digital public relations campaigning strategy. I'll also be evaluating the ability of video media to engage social media users, promote brand awareness, and craft a positive image of an organization.

To reach these ends, this study will gather insights regarding video media content as a best practice for amplifying intent and messaging for digital PR. By conducting this research project, this report will examine whether video media content is a best practice for increasing effectiveness in social media campaigning. As social media continues to dominate the communication landscape, this research argues that the creation and use of video media content are no longer optional but pivotal in any successful public relations campaign adapted to suit the emerging online world.

### **Literature Review**

Since the start and heights of the COVID-19 pandemic, public relations practitioners and marketing professionals have found it necessary to shift their promotional strategies to suit our world's new and emerging online climate for digital PR (Digital Marketing Institute, 2022)]. Video media content has been the cross-platform driving force for audience retention, dominating the web in performance, brand-consumer engagement, improved search engine rankings, and increased website traffic. According to Stanimirovic (2023), "[v]ideo is the second most used content type on social platforms to drive engagement. And that doesn't apply solely to social video platforms like TikTok." Further, social media video posts get 48% more views on average than those containing static imagery (Stanimirovic, 2023).

#### *Video Media Content*

Video media content marketing has been coined by video media specialists and public relations professionals as the future of digital marketing (Campaign Monitor, 2022). Maggine (2021) defines video media content marketing as "[a] subcategory of content marketing that includes creating, producing, and sharing video content that provides your audience with useful information to invoke interest in your business's products or services." This type of content

marketing has developed exponentially in the promotional landscape, having grown into a \$135-billion dollar industry in the United States alone (Lemonlight, 2023). Video media content in digital PR has earned prevalence for its ability to engage customers with live-streaming, interactive-360 videos, augmented reality, and (most predominantly) the development and emergence of short-form media content. By incorporating video media content into an organization's online social media engagement strategy, a brand is opening up a greater and more direct avenue for communications between itself and its consumers.

Video usage on social media allows viewers to interact directly with the content they are consuming, providing them with bite-size and easy-to-digest content that keeps the user engaged. Videos can be incredibly versatile in marketing performance, prompting their utilization as an optimal method to tackle the future of content marketing. They are engaging for audience members to watch and are significantly more noticeable than regular advertisement content, able to resonate more positively with consumers (Clapperton, 2023). Consumers communicated a higher affinity for video content claiming, "83% of study participants report that video content is becoming more important." Further statistics in their report demonstrate that 54% of consumers seek more video content creation and distribution from their favorite and most followed brands, if not for personal entertainment, then informational or educational (Campaign Monitor, 2023).

#### *Video Media Content and Visibility*

The benefits of video content marketing are boundless, particularly regarding its effect on search engine optimization (SEO). SEO is valuable for PR professionals and digital marketers to drive online traffic to their home pages. Lemonlight, a digital media strategizing corporation, released a 2023 ultimate guide to video marketing strategy. This guide noted that sites using video content perform better than those that do not because search engine algorithms are

adapting to prioritize and recommend video media. They state, "Including video on your page drives a 157 percent increase in organic traffic from search engine result pages (SERPs)," adding that site visitors spend over twice as long on a website page with video. Lemonlight's research also assessed video content quality and its correlation with backlinks, seeing higher quality content resulting in more backlinks to a brand's website pages (Lemonlight, 2023). Expert predictions made by the Forbes Agency Council in 2021 support this assessment, observing the importance of video content and SEO as brands prioritize the creation of video media in their marketing strategies. Christopher Tompkins of The Go! Agency said, "Since platforms (such as Instagram) favor accounts that post video content, this will soon become a necessity for marketers. My advice is to step out of your comfort zone; you will need video soon" (Forbes Magazine, 2021).

With the ease of virality present across social media, brands are looking to capitalize on their message-reaching capabilities and the possibility for drawing more attention and earning a greater online following for the brand. Recent social media changes demonstrate video content's massive viral potential. For instance, the creation of TikTok, Instagram reels, and Twitter and Facebook stories exemplify this growing trend. Video media is now at the forefront of all social media algorithms, promoting more visually stimulating media rather than text-based content (GoTranscript, 2022). But why exactly are we seeing such a strong sway in favored media content online? Let us look at the primary cause: a demographic shift.

### *Generational Drivers*

The preference for video, albeit slow in transition, has risen to prevalence as members of Generation Z born between 1997 and 2012, and Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 come of age, finding their voices on social media (Dimock, 2022). Different audiences require

different strategies for promotional reach, as they each favor some media types more than others (Burstein, 2017). A 2019 survey conducted by Forbes Magazine in collaboration with the Digital Marketing Institute has analyzed video content as performing best among users ages 18 to 34 regarding user engagement in social media campaigns. A Google study conducted in the same year supports these statistics, noting that 7 in 10 members of Generation Z prefer video media over static imagery because of its authenticity, helping them feel more connected to the content they are consuming (Baron, 2019).

The truth found within video media keeps viewers watching, allowing brands to leverage their messaging to include video content strategically. From creating promotional and informational videos or even customer testimonials, video content in digital public relations can be adapted to achieve different marketing and campaigning goals for practitioners. In its many forms, videos offer audiences a more interactive and compelling communication medium, from live stream engagement to following the latest trends on TikTok (Clapperton, 2023). This allows brands to connect with their audiences more creatively and interpersonally, laying the groundwork for greater customer loyalty and trust. G2 Content and SEO specialist Melanie Maggine writes, "If a picture is worth a thousand words, imagine the value of a video - one of the several reasons to use video marketing for your business" (Maggine, 2021). Viewers can more easily identify with video content rather than images, as the elements in video-based storytelling establish a solid emotional connection between audiences and a brand, leaving a more memorable impact and overall better impression (Briggs, 2022). The future of video content marketing is all about authenticity, personalization, and interactive experiences, so personalized content should be a top priority for brands wishing to enhance their engagement with customers.

RQ 1: What is the efficacy of video media content in digital PR and social media campaigning?

RQ 2: Should video content marketing be considered a necessary tactic in crafting a successful digital marketing strategy?

### Methodology

Based on the recommendations solicited from the authors in the literature review, I began my research by conducting a content analysis of resources, articles, and statistics involving video media content implementation into digital PR and marketing strategies. In assessing this, I sought to gain a better comprehension of what current studies are stating about the use of video media content in digital PR.

Considering the speed at which online algorithms change and adapt to suit new media, my next step was to gain contemporary insight regarding the effectiveness of video media content in social media platform campaigning and brand messaging. I crafted a four-part, dichotomous, and evaluative interview series with video marketing professionals and multimedia experts from various perspectives of the public relations and media production fields. I felt interviews would provide me with necessary observations from an expert-level point-of-view. Though my literature review gave me the foundational basics, I needed to dive deeper and learn of video media content's implementation into PR practice from several first-hand, experienced accounts. These interviews allowed me to gain expertise on the growing market for video content and whether my informants deemed it a necessary strategy in digital PR. I interviewed the following experts over four, 30 to 60-minute Zoom sessions:

1. Austin Satinsky, senior social strategist at Code3 Digital Marketing Agency.
2. Nicole Franklin, award-winning filmmaker, documentarian, and journalist.

3. Hilary Topper, digital marketing strategist and CEO of HJMT public relations.
4. David Henne, director of content strategy and student media engagement at Hofstra University's Lawrence Herbert School of Communication.

An 11-question outline marked the foundation of my interview series, with each query soliciting identifying information and context before asking the informants to speak on different aspects of video media content and its usage in the social media marketing space. All the questions were created in an open-ended format to allow room for further discussion. I find that these types of questions motivate speakers to provide more detail on queries closely related to their avenue of expertise, giving insight based on their experiences. The initial set contained the following questions:

1. State your full name and your current career position(s).
2. What inspired you to pursue a career in public relations and/or video media?
3. How has your experience in the field informed your current views on video content in the digital marketing space?
4. In your opinion, how effective is video media content as a tactic in digital marketing and social media campaigning for public relations?
5. How does video content compare to other types of media in terms of engagement, ROI, and reach on social media platforms? What are some of the key benefits in targeting specific demographics?
6. How can companies, in general, leverage video content to create a strong brand identity and enhance their overall reputation in the marketplace?



7. How do you feel public relations practitioners and brands use video media content to manage a crisis or negative publicity?
8. How can companies measure the effectiveness of their video content in terms of driving brand awareness, leading generation, and customer acquisition? What metrics should they be tracking?
9. How do you typically integrate video content into your broader public relations and marketing campaigns?
10. Looking ahead, what do you think the future holds for video content in public relations and digital marketing? Are there any emerging trends or technologies that you believe will shape the way companies approach video content in the coming years?
11. Do you have any final thoughts regarding the usage of video media in digital PR?

I wanted to create a baseline for comparison between all my informants, asking them a portion of the same questions to see how and if their answers differed based on personal career experiences. I also prepared individualized and supplementary questions for each interviewee based on their media workplace focuses. Those inquiries consisted of the following:

1. For Austin Satinsky (1): From what I've observed of your work with Code3, you've begun integrating video media into your social media campaigns as an engagement strategy. How has the company benefited from this tactic implementation? How effective has that been?
2. For Austin Satinsky (2): How do you work with internal stakeholders and external partners to create effective video content that resonates with target audiences and supports broader marketing and PR goals?

3. For Nicole Franklin (1): You're a video media professional with a lot of experience under your belt. Seeing how short-form media is currently dominating the entertainment space, how do you see video content being utilized as a tool for brands to engage their audiences? Have you utilized short-form videos in other aspects of your current work for promotions?
4. For Nicole Franklin (2): What are some common misconceptions about using video content in digital marketing? How do you address these misconceptions with clients and colleagues?
5. For Hilary Topper (1): You've developed an entire course here at Hofstra involving digital marketing, using your work at HJMT to demonstrate effective marketing strategies. How have you employed video content in the public relations workplace? How effective has that been?
6. For Hilary Topper (2): Do you have any specific tips or best practices for maximizing the impact of video content?
7. For David Henne (1): As the Director of Content Strategy and now a university professor, you've really put video media at the forefront of the Herbert School's social media campaigning for current and prospective students. What brought you to want to implement video content, specifically vertical video media as a part of the school's digital marketing? How effective has that been?
8. For David Henne (2): In your experience, what are some of the biggest challenges associated with creating and distributing video content as part of a broader marketing or PR strategy? How do you overcome these challenges?

Additional respondent questions came fluidly during the interview process as I asked my interviewees to elaborate on certain details, encouraging further discussion into more specific topics. In concluding my interview series, I collated the answers I received, performing a full transcription of each interview for reference. This information allowed me to evaluate and compare my interviewees' perspectives on my questions as it stands in the first quarter of 2023.

### **Findings**

My interviews with Satinsky, Franklin, Topper, and Henne shed much light on video media content and its application to digital PR. I found many intertwining viewpoints, collating similar responses regarding the necessity of its employment in social media campaigns. Across the interview series, there was a general affinity for video usage in digital marketing strategy for public relations practitioners, with each of my interviewees contributing their personal experiences with the content medium and how they feel it has impacted their work in the professional space. I have summarized the foundations of their arguments below:

#### **Austin Satinsky, Senior Social Strategist at Code3 Digital Marketing Agency**

Satinsky's experience provided much insight on video media content from an agency standpoint. When asked about the increased usage of video in digital media campaigning, he noted the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on Internet culture and how much content is digested online. He stated, "If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that people spend time on their phones in large quantities and video advertising really is what came through as the victor for a lot of companies" (A. Satinsky, personal communication, March 17, 2023). Though emphasizing the pandemic's contribution to society shifting online, he has observed the trend of video media content marketing growing gradually throughout the last few years.

In his personal experience at Code3, Satinsky mentioned that (specifically mobile-first) video content has been imperative for the success of most campaigns the organization's currently running. He said, "If I'm pulling a weekly report and I'm looking at performance at a level of granularity, that is, 'How is this creativity competing against something else we're running within this campaign?' I would say nine out of 10 times the static imagery is what is passed down or identified as ineffective," (A. Satinsky, personal communication, March 17, 2023). Satinsky highlighted the importance of social media marketing and interactivity to best communicate with audiences. "It needs to be interactive for it to be impactful. And that's the benefit of video because it's interactive from the beginning. It's telling you a story [and] conveying a message you're going to have to watch to completion to fully understand," (A. Satinsky, personal communication, March, 17, 2023). In his thoughts for the future of video media and digital marketing for PR practitioners, he stressed video content leading the way for brand-to-viewer communication and announcements, spotlighting the shift of social media algorithms to a video-forward approach.

### **Nicole Franklin, Award-winning Filmmaker, Documentarian, and Journalist**

Franklin offered the most divergent perspective, analyzing this content medium through the lens of a media production professional. Her insight covered short-form video media content as being the most attention-grabbing and affordable, stating, "Short-form is what we've been waiting for [...] how cost-effective it is. We've democratized the way, through technology, [...] that stories are told through video," (N. Franklin, personal communication, March 17, 2023). She explained video media from an independent filmmaking point of view and how short-form videos used to be overlooked until modern technology gave us the resources to create high-quality digital content. "The short-form is now more attractive," she said, "I believe, because of

attention spans. I guess it's all a tease. It's very short you know, and you want more," (N. Franklin, personal communication, March 17, 2023).

Franklin spoke at length regarding storytelling and the transparency video media content can offer brands and organizations. As a documentarian, she noted the power video media has to influence the world, recalling how videos taken and posted of the 2005 Category 5 Hurricane Katrina destruction ultimately led to government aid. With video being taken and shared across major news outlets, everyone in the world was able to see what was happening as it happened. Franklin's emphasis on video storytelling's fast-spread messaging capabilities continued into her discussion of virality. Noting expected virality as a common misconception for digital marketers and public relations professionals, she did recognize consistency and creativity in messaging as key in attracting and maintaining audience interest. "It's the pursuit of that audience. We all love to be pursued," (N. Franklin, personal communication, March 17, 2023). She did question the longevity of video media in digital PR as technology is always evolving, though she's excited to see what the future has in store for the online marketing space.

### **Hilary Topper, Digital Marketing Strategist and CEO of HJMT Public Relations**

Topper's involvement in the developing world of digital media allowed her to speak on the importance of video content in digital PR and its impact on various online platforms. Though early social media was designed for textual postings and verbiage, Topper knew things would eventually shift toward video content. She emphasized video content's prevalence across all social media platforms and how certain applications are taking note of the growing interest in video. She stated, "I think [video media content] has to be a part of anybody's integrated marketing plan. It personalizes the experience. There's a connection that I'm building with people [...] and I find that I'm getting a ton of engagement doing that" (H. Topper, personal

communication, March 16, 2023). Topper attributes the higher engagement to the rawness and authenticity that comes with posting video media.

She elaborated on the impact video has had for popular brands on TikTok, highlighting Chipotle's incorporation of this content medium into their digital PR strategy. Similarly, she mentioned her team at HJMT public relations and their usage of video content on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook to promote events and other organizational happenings. Topper assessed how short-form videos in her company's media postings have proven much more effective than traditional press releases or standard pitching methods. Specifically, she shared how one of her clients, an estate planning law firm, has successfully incorporated video into its marketing strategy on TikTok and its website. "Even websites today, most of the website is video [...] if it's a hard-to-understand topic, [video] can explain it a little better than the written word," (H. Topper, personal communication, March 16, 2023). With emerging technologies and the fast-advancing online environment, Topper emphasized the importance of video content in modern-day marketing strategies and the potential it holds for brands and businesses to reach wider audiences, engaging with them in new and exciting ways.

### **David Henne, Director of Content Strategy and SME, Hofstra University**

Henne shared his insights on the importance of video in today's digital landscape, providing his viewpoint in working directly with Gen Z individuals currently driving the high demand in video media online. He affirmed video as a pertinent component of any public relations marketing campaign. "When you're trying to rebrand, when you're trying to market a new product, when you're just trying to drum up business for an existing product, there are so many ways you could go with video. It's just the easiest entryway into telling a story" (D. Henne, personal communication, March 16, 2023). Henne believes that video is a powerful tool for

brands to use in storytelling because it provides a quick and engaging way to share information.

"Anybody can shoot video now, and that's what makes it so great. To have a compelling story with an engaging, interesting, and unscripted subject will always give you an entryway into what story you are trying to tell" (D. Henne, personal communication, March 16, 2023).

Henne's further assessment of video content in the digital PR marketing space and why it has grown exponentially in popularity with the current generations. "I think people are a lot more informed and knowledgeable about the digital space now, and [native users] have lived in this space for their entire lives" (D. Henne, personal communication, March 16, 2023). He attributes compelling and consistent video content to grasping the most audience retention. Henne speculated on the future of video content and where it may be headed in the coming years, predicting that while video content should be a priority now, he expects virtual reality to be the next frontier, providing the most immersive experience for the viewer as possible.

### **Discussion**

In collating the data from my content analysis and interview series, the results I've attained support my proposed notion in demonstrating that video media content and its inclusion in public relations digital marketing campaigns is pivotal in purveying success. As evident in preexisting studies and corroborated in my interview with Austin Satinsky, the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in compelling the shift of promotional strategies to digital PR with video content pulling the most attention from viewers across all social media platforms. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis has demonstrated an emerging preference for video content, driving social media user and audience engagement in comparison to other types of media. As detailed in the above literature review, Campaign Monitor's statistical assessment of consumers and the type of content they favor lies in the majority at 54 percent (Campaign

Monitor, 2022). Hilary Topper's insights regarding her public relations firm's trading of traditional media for a video-forward approach endorses this viewpoint further from the practicing perspective.

This prominent shift in Internet culture where short-form, fast-paced, visually stimulating content is being tracked as performing better amongst social media users (specifically in the 18 to 34 age demographic) commends the consistent use of video media to enhance audience engagement. Video media in content marketing is very conducive to suit the various needs and algorithmic preferences a brand's audience may require. As emphasized in all four of my interviews, storytelling plays a huge role in maintaining audience retention and viewer interest. I found this demonstrated in previous studies conducted regarding the practices for incorporating video media into digital PR and marketing, as was supported strongly by both Nicole Franklin and David Henne.

In particular, these two interviewees provided interesting viewpoints on the matter of storytelling in compelling video content creation as their experiences in the fields of video media and public relations informed their opinions in different ways. While Franklin spoke of the transparency in short-form video storytelling, Henne related it as a strategy in increasing audience interactivity and engagement. Satinsky supported both Franklin and Henne's points, honing in on the roundabout importance of driving a story to completion. Topper's views rhymed well with other answers provided in the interview series, noting the personability that this form of digital media storytelling can provide between a brand and its audience.

Prohibition PR's report on the utilization of video content as a part of a brand's PR strategy corroborated this information as provided by my interviewees, noting video's great potential to drive a narrative for campaign development through the use of visual storytelling.



Such a tactic has exhibited quantified success, increasing sales, and conversions, upping a brand's image significantly by adding great value to messaging beyond text and imagery. "This is backed by statistics, it's estimated that video accounts for over 80 percent of all consumer traffic, demonstrating the power of video on Internet users, as well as the solution it clearly offers marketers," (Clapperton, 2023).

With the extensive industry building around video media content marketing, brands, and organizations should capitalize on the benefits video content has evidently provided (i.e., driving online traffic between social media and websites, maintaining high online engagement between brands and their audiences, as well as improving search engine optimization and brand recognition. Expert predictions made by Forbes Magazine and the Digital Marketing Institute exemplify this conditional factor, asserting video usage as essential in modern marketing (Forbes Magazine, 2021 & Digital Marketing Institute, 2022). With more consumers online now than ever before, there is stiff competition across digital media channels. Focusing efforts on the integration and/or introduction of video content into a brand's digital PR has been soundly proven to increase brand awareness, bettering online reputation management through audience interactivity (Kent, 2022). This concludes that video media must be leveraged across social media platforms so brands can best engage with their target audiences in a manner that's both strategic and effective.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the use of video media in digital public relations campaigns and its effectiveness in achieving PR campaigning objectives. Based on a comprehensive assessment of industry reports, survey studies, and interviews, I have found that video content marketing is an essential and highly advantageous tool for public relations

practitioners to integrate into their digital marketing and social media strategies, aligning with my proposed hypothesis. The analysis I conducted revealed that incorporating video media content into PR campaigns can significantly increase reach, engagement, website traffic, and online conversions. My study also found that video content marketing can enable marketers and practitioners to establish a stronger personal connection with their audiences, building trust and credibility, positioning their brands as thought leaders in the industry.

The insights gained from my interview series provided practical applications of video media content marketing in digital PR, which helped me to gain a thorough understanding of the opportunities that arise when implementing video into a digital marketing strategy. The literature review and content analysis orchestrated in this study supported the assertion that video is the future of digital PR. Reviewed statistics and findings demonstrate that video content is highly engaging and effective at capturing the attention of audiences. However, I recognize there may be limitations to the generalizability of my findings. The latest survey statistics I gathered were from the final quarter of 2022. With the Internet and its usage of video content marketing being a fast-paced, adaptive, and quickly transformative medium, I would have liked to gather more up-to-date statistics as further support for my thesis. To overcome this limitation, I would have conducted a nationwide survey of Generation Z and Millennials ages 18 to 34 regarding their usage and reception of video media content from brands across social media platforms, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data as further confirmation. While conducting this survey would have likely provided more comprehensive data, it may not be necessary as the study's findings are supported by various industry reports, survey studies, and predictive analytics.

This study highlights the importance of incorporating video media in PR campaigns and emphasizes the need for PR practitioners to invest time and resources in creating compelling video content. By doing so, PR practitioners can effectively communicate their messaging to their target audiences, increasing brand awareness and loyalty, and ultimately achieving their social media campaigning efforts and goal sets. The insights gained from this study provide a solid foundation for future research, emphasizing the importance of continued and necessary investment in video media content marketing for digital public relations campaigns to ensure campaign success.

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