

# Monetization Strategies of Chinese Knowledge Content Creators on Social Media Platforms

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**Abstract.** In recent years, the increasing audience of knowledge-based short videos in China has made the knowledge payment industry develop continuously. Therefore, it is helpful to analyze the monetisation mode of knowledge short video creators for the sustainable development of the industry. This paper collects and analyzes data from four different media platforms and finds that there are obvious differences in user groups and content preferences of different platforms. Moreover, short video bloggers on different platforms mainly choose different monetization modes. At the same time, private domain traffic is also an effective way for video creators to consider monetization. Finally, this paper will summarize the best monetization ways that knowledge short video creators on different platforms can take and the ways that can maintain the long-term attractiveness of the industry. For example, to ensure the quality of content and make innovations on this basis, to meet the diversified needs of users, to understand the preferences of users on different platforms and make adjustments. To ensure long-term credibility, bloggers need to be aware of the importance of private domain traffic.

## 1 Introduction

With the popularity of the Internet and social media, the Chinese knowledge payment market has experienced rapid growth in recent years. In terms of user scale, it has reached 477 million in 2022 and is expected to exceed 500 million in 2023 [1]. The scope of video content producers has also expanded from professional fields to general knowledge disseminators, which forms a situation of "All the people are teachers". Especially during the epidemic, this trend was obvious. It can be seen that both the number of users and the number of video producers have a continuous growth trend. The knowledge-paid industry has a good foundation in this regard.

In terms of market size, it has reached 67.5 billion yuan in 2021 and is expected to exceed 180 billion yuan in 2023 [1]. Also, the demand on the consumer side is also growing, especially for the "35 +" user group, whose preference for knowledge-paid content and

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consumption power is particularly prominent. It can be seen that the huge market scale is also conducive to the sustainable vitality of this industry.

Among the different types of knowledge payment, short video paid content accounted for the highest proportion, reaching 75.7%, while live broadcast and graphic paid content also accounted for a considerable market share. Obviously, with the continuous progress of science and technology and the increasing diversification of user needs, the knowledge-based payment industry is no longer limited to the traditional model but is moving towards a more diversified and innovative direction. In this process, more and more platforms and content creators begin to explore new forms and methods to meet users' personalized and professional needs for knowledge acquisition. For example, with the popularization of mobile Internet, the forms of knowledge payment have become more flexible and diverse. Users can learn and charge anytime and anywhere through various channels such as mobile phone applications and online courses. These changes have not only brought new growth points to the knowledge payment industry, but also provided new impetus for knowledge dissemination and education popularization in the whole society. Therefore, it can be predicted that in the future, the knowledge payment industry will continue to maintain its vitality and innovation, and provide users with richer and more efficient knowledge services.

However, knowledge short videos also have some development difficulties. Taking the Pear Video platform as an example, due to the low loyalty of its users to the platform, it was difficult to attract investment from large advertisers. At the same time, compared with the Douyin platform, its huge video creator system and high requirements for video quality also increased its operating costs [2]. To conclude, low returns and high costs have brought serious liquidity difficulties to the platform.

This paper will deeply explore and analyze the actual situation of knowledge content creators on different media platforms by analyzing data. Also, it will reveal whether the quality of their content can really make the audience have substantial knowledge harvest. At the same time, this paper will further analyze the diversified traffic monetization models currently existing on these platforms and evaluate whether they can bring stable and sustainable revenue sources for creators.

## 2 Literature review

In recent years, with the rise of the knowledge payment market, research on knowledge products and their payment mode has gradually become a hot topic in academia. In the study *Research on the Key Constituents and Communication Logic of Knowledge-based Short Videos* [3]. Liu Siqi and Zeng Xiangmin highlight that technical packaging, professional producers, and regular updates are crucial factors contributing to the success of knowledge-based short videos. Meanwhile, Peng Lan, in *Internet Knowledge Products*, advocates for an expansion from fragmented knowledge to systematic knowledge, pure knowledge products to composite products, and manual production to intelligent technology-driven production [4].

Furthermore, Zhou Baohua's *An Empirical Study on the Current Status of Chinese Internet Users' Content Payment and Its Influencing Factors* reveals that entertainment and audio-visual content dominate paid content [5]. Notably, the payment behaviours of online celebrities and internet tools have a significant positive impact on content payment, whereas a price-sensitive lifestyle exerts a negative influence.

The number of users has soared with the rise of short video platforms, the media traffic market was quickly occupied by creators of all fields on these platforms. The research report, which was created by Liwen Yao and Fengfeng Duan, mentioned that the birth of Internet celebrities and the creation of personal characteristics, attracting more people's attention and entering the short video platform, and the growth of the number of fans has promoted the

development of net celebrities and the increase of personal value. This virtuous cycle brings considerable traffic to short video platforms [6].

However, the income of knowledge creation works is lower than that of live broadcasting. "The business problem of knowledge short video is that the realization incentive is insufficient, and the income benefit brought by it is far less than that of games and live broadcasts", Qiana Hu pointed out in an article on the profit model analysis of Bilibili' s knowledge short video [7].

In China, short videos, as an emerging media form, are constantly innovating in terms of their inherent value and expressive applications, becoming an indispensable dynamic element and social language within social media networks. Shan Shan's study on the production characteristics and development strategies of knowledge-based short videos points out that as human learning methods change, deviating from traditional approaches, the short video ecosystem is brewing a positive transformation, and "knowledge" is poised to become a significant driving force behind this transformation. Whether knowledge-based short videos can explore a sustainable production and operation model, fully activate societal UGC knowledge resources, and accommodate larger-scale quality traffic depends on the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, including the industry, society, enterprises, and content creators.

Content monetization is a shared goal pursued by knowledge products and commercial products, as well as personal media and corporate production. To ensure long-term sustainable development, achieving product profitability is crucial. Historically, brands have served as traffic aggregation points, and through brand operations and IP creation, they can build stable user bases, laying a solid foundation for the monetization of knowledge-based content. Currently, there are diverse avenues for content monetization, including but not limited to platform revenue sharing based on traffic, advertising insertions based on fan base, e-commerce promotion, live interactive broadcasts, and paid courses for specific target groups. Only when knowledge-based content creators receive corresponding value rewards on social media platforms can the ecosystem of knowledge-based short video platforms thrive and develop sustainably [8].

In the context of the digital age, short video platforms have evolved as a core channel for people to access information, express their personalities, and share their daily lives. As the industry continues to develop, the market structure of short video platforms is gradually transitioning from "incremental expansion" to "stock optimization." According to Rui Jie Guan's article on the monetization dilemma and breakthrough strategies for Chinese short video platforms, knowledge-based content creators and platforms still face certain monetization challenges in the current market environment. In this context, how to efficiently utilize and maximize these potential dividends has become a critical issue that the industry urgently needs to address. Currently, knowledge-based short video platforms can further promote commercialization and monetization of high-quality content via enhancing value, optimizing incentives, creating IP, and leveraging tech for efficient dissemination [9].

From the perspective of international and overseas media platforms, Yin Yue and Yao Yaning pointed out in terms of the dissemination of excellent Chinese culture on new media platforms that the dissemination of Yellow River culture knowledge on YouTube faces the problems of low content quality and vague understanding of the audience. Therefore, accurate communication and continuous improvement of video quality can improve audience experience and further contribute to the continuous and efficient global communication of Chinese culture [10]. Qiu, J et al. suggest that there was a surge in paid knowledge products a year or two ago but consumer interest seems to be waning. However, after data analysis, they found that China's knowledge payment market is still large [11]. It can be seen that the huge primary market base of the industry gives more space for the development of knowledge short videos and other content. Wang Hongxia put forward "brand dependence" in her

research, which develops through the interaction between users and brands [12]. Having brand dependency means that bloggers have built a solid fan base and brand recognition, laying the foundation for their future monetization. Virginia Chan and Margaret Allman-Farinelli found significant levels of unhealthy eating among young people. However, the use of social media to promote the importance of health is effective because young people prefer to use social platforms such as Instagram [13]. Therefore, the contribution of young people to the development of social media platforms is also important.

To sum up, there is a gap in the research on the traffic monetization mode of knowledge content creators on Chinese social media platforms. Most of the existing research mainly focuses on content creation and user interaction, but there is insufficient discussion on how to effectively use traffic for commercial monetization strategies and models. This includes a comparative analysis of different monetization channels, the benefit distribution mechanism between creators and platforms, and the long-term impact of traffic monetization on content quality and creator reputation.

### 3 Methodology

This paper mainly focuses on collecting data from four social media platforms between July 1 and July 30, 2024, which are Douyin, WeChat official account, Xiaohongshu and Bilibili. Different platforms have different extraction indicators as the volume of each platform is different. As for Douyin, knowledge short video bloggers with 10 million followers or more are the benchmarks. Their account names, video duration, play volume and comment number are recorded and the content field and their monetization mode are analyzed. According to the sample data of the new rank, on the WeChat public account platform, we pay special attention to those public accounts whose total number of articles read more than 3 million during the period. On the Xiaohongshu platform, the data selected is from educational and popular science short video bloggers from July 1 to July 31, 2024, based on the Xiaohongshu Ranking List, which ranks influencers on the Xiaohongshu platform's performance. The ranking is calculated based on five metrics: number of followers, follower growth, likes, saves, and comments. Through comprehensive calculations, it was found that the top-ranking short video bloggers primarily monetize through brand collaborations and fan interactions. In addition to public domain traffic such as brand collaborations, these high-quality bloggers typically have private domain traffic channels like fan groups and online courses, enabling them to stand out among their peers. Additionally, 24 accounts with more than 4 million followers on the Bilibili platform for observation based on Huo Shao Cloud data have been selected, which means to explore the content characteristics and realization pattern of these accounts.

### 4 Result

**Table 1.** Monetization models and total sales of short video bloggers

Username	Monetization models		
	Shop window	Selling courses	Advertisements
1			√
2	√		
3	√		√
4	√		
5	√		
6	√		
7	√		√
8	√		

9	√		√
10	√		√
11			
12	√		
13	√		

As shown in Table 1, different knowledge short vloggers tend to choose different monetization modes even on the same platform. The main way most bloggers make money on Douyin is by opening shop Windows, followed by inserting video ads, and almost no bloggers choose to sell courses.

Currently, the traffic mastered by knowledge-based short video creators is mainly divided into public domain traffic and private domain traffic. The second conclusion that can be drawn from a closer look is that for creators who are relatively short of public domain traffic, private domain traffic will be a key solution to their dilemma.

The third result is that the monetization models of knowledge-based accounts on video platforms are primarily influenced by their level of professionalism and the breadth of their subject matter coverage.

Highly specialized accounts tend to adopt the monetization strategy of launching online educational courses, where the success hinges on the depth and appeal of the course content, rather than solely on the subscriber base or average video views. Examples include renowned professors such as Luo Xiang and Dai Jianye, whose academic backgrounds and teaching capabilities ensure the quality of their courses, effectively transmitting knowledge through their videos.

In contrast, popular science accounts aimed at mass audiences prefer to monetize through partnerships with merchants for advertising and utilizing the product showcase function. When videos focus on similar themes or domains, the showcase often displays products closely related to the content, such as self-authored science books or textbooks, reinforcing the alignment between content and market demand. While for accounts with broader content scopes, they may display products recommended by advertisers.

About the fourth result, it is found that there are significant differences in user groups and content preferences across various platforms. Video-based knowledge content, especially in the category of science popularization, is more popular on video platforms such as Bilibili and Douyin. In contrast, text-based knowledge content, such as book reviews and health knowledge, shows a stable audience foundation on platforms like WeChat Official Accounts. The data from the platform indicates that within a month from July 1 to July 31, there were 56 knowledge category accounts (including culture, health, education, and encyclopedia) with a cumulative reading volume exceeding 3 million, with cultural accounts being the most at 20; education accounts came second with 18; and health and encyclopedia categories were fewer, with 11 and 7, respectively. Although there are fewer health category accounts, their cumulative reading volume is high, with 4 out of the top 10 accounts being health-related. This leads to the conclusion that knowledge content created in text form is mass content, such as book excerpts, book reviews, health knowledge, sports knowledge, etc. Professional popular science content, such as "Luo Xiang's Criminal Law" and "The Infinitely Bright Daily Popular Science," has gained widespread attention on multiple platforms through video formats, further confirming the effectiveness of video in conveying complex knowledge.

## 5 Discussion

Firstly, there are two main reasons why different bloggers on the same platform choose different monetization modes. The first is the preferences of the platform's advertisers. Some bloggers will be approached by advertisers after Posting some videos and getting high likes

and comments, or accumulating a certain number of followers. Bloggers will see these as a way to make money. Therefore, on Douyin platform, almost all bloggers will choose this way to cash out after they become famous.

The second is the preferences of Douyin users. For viewers who browse short knowledge videos, they tend to use Douyin to learn the knowledge shared by their favorite knowledge bloggers. At the same time, the video style of some knowledgeable short video bloggers adopts the form of animation, which can also make the audience more relaxed and happier to learn. On the contrary, most people may resist learning in the form of online classes. For example, some children like scientific knowledge and small experiments but their lessons at school already give them enough pressure. If children are allowed to learn their favourite knowledge in the form of online classes on weekends, it may bring the opposite result.

However, there will be some disadvantages to adopting only a single Monetization Mode. The first is for video creators, who are losing out on a wider source of funding. However, for some audiences, opening the classroom will make them lose interest in learning knowledge. But there is no doubt that there are still some people who prefer to buy courses to learn knowledge. These people may prefer uninterrupted access to all the knowledge in a given video. However, the way bloggers insert long ads in videos may make viewers lose interest in continuing to watch the video.

Secondly, the over-reliance of the audience on certain bloggers may cause losses to them. For example, people may be deceived by bad merchants. Some bloggers will guarantee the quality of their products in the early stage to attract more fans, while those who are too loyal will only choose to buy what they need in the window of a few bloggers. But some bloggers can't stick around for long because controlling the selection process strictly adds to the cost. At the same time, there are many other bloggers selling the same type of product but of higher quality. As a result, some fans may find product problems after a while and lose the opportunity to get more resources. This will not only cause trouble to people's health and life but also waste fans' money.

Currently, short video creators' traffic is split into public and private domains. For those with low public domain traffic, private domain traffic is crucial for overcoming challenges.

Public domain traffic does not belong to specific bloggers but to the entire platform or channel. For bloggers focusing on knowledge sharing, public domain traffic has the following characteristics: first, massive traffic. Public domain platforms typically have a large user base, providing bloggers with a continuous source of traffic. Secondly, intense competition. Due to the openness of public domain traffic, all bloggers are competing for the same piece of traffic cake, resulting in intense competition. Thirdly, low conversion rates. User behaviors in public domain traffic are diverse and fragmented, making it difficult to form stable user relationships and loyalty, leading to relatively low conversion rates. Lastly, investment is required. In order to attract more users from public domain traffic, bloggers usually need to invest a certain amount of advertising costs or time costs for promotion and optimization.

Private domain traffic is the concept opposite to public domain traffic, referring to traffic resources that are independently owned, freely controlled, and can be reused multiple times by enterprises or individuals. These resources are usually accumulated in various channels such as the official website of the enterprise, applications, mini-programs, social media (such as WeChat official accounts, personal WeChat accounts, etc.), forming the enterprise's or individual's own user pool.

Lack of private domain traffic may lead to the following problems for knowledge-based bloggers: first, low user stickiness. Without private domain traffic, bloggers cannot establish direct and close contact with fans. This lack of direct communication can lead to reduced user stickiness, where fans may only occasionally pay attention to the blogger's public content but lack sufficient motivation to continue following and interacting. Secondly, limited marketing effects. Private domain traffic is an important foundation for bloggers to

carry out precise marketing. Without private domain traffic, bloggers find it difficult to understand the specific needs and interests of fans, making it hard to launch courses, products, or services that meet fan expectations. Thirdly, difficulties in content monetization. Private domain traffic provides knowledge-based bloggers with an important channel for content monetization. Without private domain traffic, bloggers may struggle to directly reach potential users willing to pay for high-quality content. Additionally, limited influence. Private domain traffic is an important way for bloggers to expand their influence and shape their brand image. Without private domain traffic, a blogger's influence will mainly be limited to the fan base on public platforms, making it difficult to further expand and deepen their influence. This will restrict the blogger's development space and influence within the industry. The last one is weak resilience. Due to the lack of a stable user base and support, bloggers may lack the flexibility and resilience needed to respond to market changes effectively.

It is evident that the lack of private domain traffic will bring various problems and challenges to knowledge-based bloggers. Therefore, for knowledge-based bloggers, establishing and operating private domain traffic is crucial. Private domain traffic features autonomy, free access, reusability, and high stickiness. Knowledge-based bloggers can freely manage and operate this traffic without relying on third-party platforms. Moreover, private domain traffic is almost free. Once public domain traffic is introduced into private domain traffic, bloggers can continue to reach and operate these users through low-cost or even free methods. Private domain traffic can also be repeatedly utilized. For example, many knowledge-based bloggers create private group chats on platforms like Xiaohongshu, requiring users to pay to become members of the fan group to join the chat. This increases user stickiness and conversion rates, achieves traffic monetization, and makes it easier to generate repeat purchases and word-of-mouth spread.

There are various ways in which short video platform bloggers can monetize through private domain traffic. Here are some main strategies and methods: first is direct sales conversion, including product sales and live broadcasting with goods. In terms of product sales, bloggers can directly recommend and sell their products or services in short videos. By establishing closer connections with fans through private messages, friends' circles, or community channels, they can guide them to make purchases. For instance, showcasing product usage in videos and providing purchase links or discount codes in the comments section. In terms of live streaming with goods, bloggers can use private domain traffic for live broadcasts with goods, increasing sales conversion rates through real-time interaction, product demonstrations, and limited-time offers. Before the live broadcast, preheating can be done through private domain channels to attract more fan attention. The second is membership services and knowledge payment. Membership charging refers to converting private domain traffic into paying members, providing exclusive service content or special offers. For example, setting up a members-only area to offer exclusive courses, discounted products, and other value-added services. Knowledge payment refers to bloggers launching paid courses, e-books, columns, and other content related to specific fields or interests, selling them through private domain channels. The third is community operation and event promotion. Community operation involves bloggers creating active communities, increasing user stickiness and conversion rates through community interaction and sharing. Regularly holding promotional activities, group purchases, lotteries, etc., in the community can stimulate user purchases. Event promotion involves bloggers using private domain traffic to organize online and offline events such as fan meetings, new product launches, etc., to generate income through ticket sales, sponsorship cooperation, etc.

In conclusion, private domain traffic is traffic resources that enterprises or individuals own independently, can freely control, and reuse multiple times, and possess characteristics such as autonomy, free access, reusability, and high stickiness. Through private domain

traffic operation, knowledge-based short video bloggers can reduce customer acquisition costs, increase conversion rates, enhance user stickiness, and promote word-of-mouth dissemination, among other values.

Knowledge-based accounts on video platforms can select suitable monetization models based on their expertise and interests. To be specific, creators of highly specialized knowledge-based accounts are typically experts or educators in their respective fields. Their content often delves into the depths of a particular domain's knowledge and skills, targeting audiences with a keen interest or professional need in that area. Consequently, these accounts can effectively monetize through the sale of high-quality courses. Conversely, popular science accounts cater to a broader audience and accessibility attracts a large following, enabling accounts to swiftly convert their wide reach into commercial value through advertising partnerships and product showcases. Therefore, creators can satisfy diverse audience needs, enhancing collaboration opportunities with merchants, benefiting creators themselves, and driving the industry's positive and sustainable development.

However, attention must be paid to shortcomings as well. Highly specialized accounts should not only ensure content depth and rigor but also adapt to contemporary short-video audience aesthetics, making videos more visually appealing. Furthermore, their courses should prioritize practicality to meet target audiences' professional needs. For popular science accounts relying on product showcases and advertising, strengthening the relevance between video content and recommended products is essential to boost purchase intent and trust. Rigorous product and advertising vetting is also crucial to avoid compromising account credibility for profit. Ultimately, regardless of the monetization model, enhancing video quality remains paramount. Given inevitable content overlap within a domain, creators should innovate in topic selection and audience needs, prioritizing content excellence before selecting appropriate and ethical monetization strategies.

Creators face a variety of content formats and platform choices. Choosing the right platform and content format is critical to monetizing traffic. Cultural and health content, due to its close connection with daily life, is usually transmitted in text form on platforms such as WeChat public accounts, which is easy for audiences to understand and absorb. An example is the success of health accounts such as "Dingxiang Doctor" on webchat public accounts, which shows that the matching of specific content and platform characteristics can attract stable traffic. On the contrary, because of its distance from daily life, knowledge and popular science content is more suitable to be displayed on platforms such as TikTok and B station through visual forms such as images and videos, so as to enhance audience's understanding and interest. For example, the dissemination of professional popular science content such as "Luo Xiang says Criminal Law" shows the advantages of video content in transferring complex knowledge. In addition, the ability to monetize different platforms is also an important consideration, and if short video creators can distribute content across platforms, they will be able to access a wider range of revenue sources.

In order to maximize the impact and commercial value of content, creators can adopt the following strategies: First, deeply understand the preferences and habits of the target audience, and choose the platform and form that best suits their content characteristics; Secondly, focus on personalized content creation to maintain user stickiness by providing high-quality content and building online reputation; Third, seize the trend of Internet, use multi-platform strategy to expand the channels of content dissemination and realization; Finally, platforms, such as webchat public accounts, can promote the balanced development and innovation of all kinds of knowledge content by optimizing algorithm recommendations and providing more support.



## 6 Conclusion

In summary, the monetization models of knowledge-based accounts on video platforms are influenced by their level of professionalism and the breadth of their subject matter coverage. Accounts with strong professionalism monetize through the sale of high-quality courses, whereas popular science accounts tend to rely more on collaborations with advertisers and product showcase functions. Creators should select monetization models based on their own characteristics, continuously enhance content quality, and innovate presentation formats to satisfy the diverse needs of audiences. At the same time, they must ensure the credibility of products and advertisements, thereby promoting the diversification and professionalization of knowledge-based content creation. Also, different platforms attract different user groups and have their own preferences for content formats. Video platforms such as Bilibili and Douyin are suitable for disseminating knowledge-based content, while WeChat Official Accounts are more appropriate for sharing knowledge in the form of text, such as culture and health. Creators should choose the most suitable platform and form based on the characteristics of the content and the needs of the audience to enhance the impact of the content and achieve effective traffic monetization. At the same time, platforms should also provide support to promote the balanced development of various types and forms of content. In addition, for video creators, they need to understand the needs of different audiences for paid knowledge and make adjustments. In this way, the audience can not only learn knowledge and buy goods in their favorite way, but also increase the amount of cash. In addition, they need to secure their long-term credibility to prevent losing viewers. For video viewers, they should be more aware of their needs for knowledge or products and avoid limitations. Also, in today's social media landscape, the success of knowledge-based short video creators largely depends on their ability to control and manage traffic. This article further explores the importance of private domain traffic for knowledge-based short video bloggers and its operational strategies. Through a deep understanding and efficient utilization of private domain traffic, knowledge-based short video creators can interact more effectively with fans, enhance the commercial conversion capabilities of their content, expand their influence, and thereby stand out in a fiercely competitive market environment.

## Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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