

Monetization and Maintenance of Economic Benefits of Short Video IP: A Case Study of Douyin Creator “Xiao Yu Hai Tang” (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-03-24T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

As the short-video industry grows increasingly prosperous, the economic returns generated by influencer IPs are multiplying exponentially. The question of how to incubate an influencer account and successfully monetize its traffic while ensuring subsequent maintenance has become an urgent challenge that major MCN (Multi-Channel Network) companies are keen to resolve in their pursuit of economic benefits. This paper takes the Douyin blogger “Xiao Yu Hai Tang” as a case study to explore contemporary pathways for monetizing and maintaining the economic benefits of individual influencer IPs. Through analysis of the account’s current status, content formats, and business model, it is discovered that leveraging public aesthetic preferences as an entry point, and planning and producing content that aligns with audience expectations while remaining achievable in everyday life, can enable short-video IPs to acquire greater traffic and attention—this also constitutes the foundation for realizing IP economic benefits.

Full Text

Monetization and Maintenance of Economic Value for Short-Video IPs: A Case Study of Douyin Blogger “Xiao Yu Haitang”

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Abstract: With the burgeoning prosperity of the short-video industry, the economic value generated by internet celebrities is increasing exponentially. How to incubate an influencer account and successfully monetize and maintain its traffic has become an urgent issue for MCN (Multi-Channel Network) companies seeking economic benefits. This paper takes Douyin blogger “Xiao Yu Haitang”

as a case study to explore current methods for monetizing and maintaining the economic value of personal IPs. Through analysis of Xiao Yu Haitang's account status, content formats, and business model, this study finds that using popular aesthetic preferences as an entry point and planning content that meets public expectations while remaining achievable in daily life can help short-video IPs gain more traffic and attention.

Keywords: Influencer economy; Personal IP; Short video; Xiao Yu Haitang

1. Literature Review

1.1 New Forms of IP in the Internet Era IP (Intellectual Property) refers to an individual's ownership of certain creative achievements. In the internet environment, the meaning of IP differs significantly from the traditional media era. In the print media era, personal IPs mainly appeared in the form of column writers. Subsequently, in the television era, personal IPs gradually manifested as famous journalists, renowned programs, and celebrity hosts, relying on the dissemination power and influence of programs to attract audiences to focus on individuals [1]. In today's internet era, the forms and meanings of IP have undergone substantial changes. Even ordinary people can access channels for value expression, breaking the channel monopoly of traditional media. Current IPs can refer to individuals, teams, influencers, or celebrities—anything that can attract attention and traffic and be monetized qualifies as an IP. They publish video or graphic content carrying viewpoints, products, or lifestyles according to the different attributes of internet platforms, winning the attention of platform users and acquiring traffic to achieve monetization.

1.2 Research on Short-Video User Needs and Satisfaction Short videos refer to video content products with playback durations ranging from several seconds to several minutes, disseminated through mobile intelligent terminals and relying on mobile social media platforms and social chains. They are characterized by mobility, lightweight nature, and fragmentation. According to the 48th "Statistical Report on China's Internet Development" released by CNNIC in September 2021, as of June 2021, China's online video (including short video) user base reached 944 million, accounting for 93.4% of all internet users. Among them, short-video users numbered 888 million, representing 87.8% of all internet users [2]. Currently, there are numerous domestic short-video applications, and the market has begun to differentiate. Users exhibit differentiated characteristics in their choices of short videos. Based on this, Liu Mingzheng conducted an indexed ranking of user-generated content on currently popular domestic short-video applications, with the weight ranking of criteria being: information quality > system quality > service quality. In terms of information quality, comprehensibility is most important, followed by quality and personalization. What users care least about is whether the content has proximity. This shows that for users, short, easy-to-understand, interesting, and novel content is most important [3]. Moreover, in research on various short-video platforms, Douyin

far surpasses other platforms in user satisfaction regarding both information quality and service quality. Therefore, Douyin should be the first choice for users engaged in short-video content creation.

In summary, research on short-video content production is currently a hot topic. Individuals publish content through short videos and accumulate fans to form personal IPs. How to obtain long-term economic benefits through the shaping of short-video IPs has become one of the issues requiring research. Therefore, this paper will take Douyin blogger “Xiao Yu Haitang” as a case study to analyze her account status, affiliation, content characteristics, business model, existing problems, and propose recommendations.

2. Current Status and Affiliation of Xiao Yu Haitang

Xiao Yu Haitang is affiliated with Nanjing Toutiao Company, which owns numerous short-video bloggers with video formats focusing on drama, photography, and beauty content. She released her first short video on April 29, 2021, after which the phrase “Hey boys, sister is here” became popular across the Douyin platform. By August 2021, in just four months, Xiao Yu Haitang’s follower count on Douyin alone exceeded ten million. To date, her combined follower count across platforms including Xiaohongshu, Kuaishou, and Weibo has also surpassed ten million.

Xiao Yu Haitang’s video content demonstrates extremely high verticality, focusing primarily on photography and beauty, which aligns with the aesthetic needs of most women when browsing short videos. Consequently, she attracts a predominantly female audience. According to official data from Douyin’s Juliang Xingtou, female fans account for 89% of Xiao Yu Haitang’s followers, with males comprising only 11%. Moreover, her fans are primarily concentrated in the 18-30 age group, the main demographic for online consumption. Therefore, her video content and embedded advertising products cater to the consumption habits and needs of most women. With her massive fan base and strong fan loyalty, Xiao Yu Haitang can easily stimulate fans’ desire to purchase through video product placements, generating profits for brands. As of October 2021, the cost of a single product placement in one of Xiao Yu Haitang’s Douyin videos had reached as high as RMB 700,000.

As a short-video blogger, Xiao Yu Haitang’s content format primarily uses the gimmick of taking photos with attractive men of the opposite sex to increase the story appeal of her videos, thereby attracting viewers and embedding advertising products to obtain economic benefits. She uses Douyin as her main development platform, with Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu, and Weibo as auxiliary platforms to create a comprehensive platform-based dissemination matrix. Unlike other bloggers who achieve instant fame with a single video and then transform, Xiao Yu Haitang’s success is the result of team planning and marketing. The biggest tag created for this account is “taking couple photos with 999 handsome guys.” Her affiliated company, Nanjing Toutiao, is a mature MCN company that has

incubated many ten-million-level bloggers such as “Brother Monkey Talks Cars” and “Brother Bajie Talks Cars.” The company’s operation of Xiao Yu Haitang’s account is not limited to this single account. After the Xiao Yu Haitang account became popular, the company subsequently incubated additional accounts centered around this IP, including “It’s Xiao Yu Yeah,” “Xiao Yu’s Mom,” “Da Huang (Xiao Yu Haitang’s photographer),” and “Nini (Xiao Yu’s old sister).” The video content published by these accounts is mostly related to Xiao Yu Haitang herself. Through the aggregation of video content from these five accounts, a complete image of Xiao Yu Haitang is shaped, making her IP image more three-dimensional. These four accounts also operate independently, forming distinct personalities and stories, creating new IPs based on the Xiao Yu Haitang IP to pursue additional economic benefits.

3. Video Content Characteristics and Business Model

Compared with bloggers who focus solely on beauty or photography, Xiao Yu Haitang’s video content format is more innovative. Her videos effectively combine two topics of interest to women—photography and beauty—achieving a 1+1>2 effect. Although Xiao Yu Haitang’s videos lack professional beauty knowledge and techniques, according to traffic monitoring of Douyin’s backend by QianGua Data, her video metrics in the beauty industry field far exceed those of other bloggers in the industry. This is because compared with videos explaining professional knowledge content, users prefer simple, easy-to-understand, interesting, and novel videos. Moreover, Xiao Yu Haitang herself appears more ordinary and down-to-earth compared to other meticulously made-up internet celebrities, which narrows the distance between her and her fans. The behaviors presented in her videos—such as approaching handsome men at close range and taking intimate couple photos—boost the confidence of a large portion of fans as ordinary women, as such situations rarely occur in real life. Fans’ curiosity about the videos takes precedence, making “non-proximity” a major advantage of her videos. Xiao Yu Haitang’s team had clear positioning and analysis of the video content and format to be published from the initial planning stage, obtaining traffic by catering to the interest preferences of most audiences in the market. The characteristics of her video content mainly include the following aspects.

3.1 Distinctive Video Style and Strong Narrative Quality The positioning of short-video content types is similar to that of all media content—finding relatively unique fields, as scarcity equals value. Currently, the short-video market suffers from serious homogenization. Without unique style and content creativity, one will be quickly eliminated by the market. The main reason Xiao Yu Haitang can stand out among numerous short-video bloggers is that her video style is clearly differentiated from other bloggers. She successfully created her own IP image with the help of tags such as the slogan “Hey boys, sister is here” and the background music “Be Your One-Minute Lover.” Pursuing stylized effects is beneficial for creating content IPs, and an exclusive style un-

doubtedly helps works be recognized and remembered by users among massive amounts of similar information [1].

Storytelling is the best communication method. The main content of Xiao Yu Haitang's short videos is "finding handsome guys to take couple photos." By filming various situations that occur during the process of "finding handsome guys," the overall coherence and narrative quality of the video content are increased, enhancing audience engagement and curiosity during viewing. The interaction between Xiao Yu Haitang and her photographer is also a point of interest for many fans. The photographer's voice generally appears as background audio in the videos, communicating and interacting with Xiao Yu Haitang. Through clever use of language, their intimate relationship is inadvertently revealed, attracting fans' attention and satisfying their voyeuristic desires. Usually, if a short video does not tell the entire shooting process, viewers will continue to follow the account's content updates to learn about subsequent developments and see the final couple photos. This narrative format cleverly strengthens user stickiness.

3.2 Emphasis on Fan Interaction and User Feedback A major characteristic of internet platforms is "interactivity." Compared to the distance between "celebrities" and ordinary people in traditional media, KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) on current social platforms can interact with their fans in real-time through private messages, likes, comments, and other methods, satisfying fans' psychology of hoping to receive reverse attention. Similarly, KOLs can also receive real-time comments and attitudes from audiences regarding content, allowing them to better optimize and improve content formats based on audience feedback. While engaging in these basic interactions with fans, Xiao Yu Haitang also invites fans to record videos together, appearing on camera with her. This format further narrows the distance between her and fans, eliminating boundaries. She also conducts irregular lottery activities on the platform to give back to fans with benefits, making the relationship with fans more intimate through this back-and-forth interaction and strengthening fans' trust in her. The establishment of fan groups and Weibo super topics has also made the relationship between Xiao Yu Haitang and fans closer. Daily communication and interaction with fans in fan groups, sharing moods, and communicating with fans as friends further increase fan stickiness. Weibo super topics gather fans who like her together to create a community effect.

3.3 Multi-Platform Three-Dimensional Dissemination and Matrix Construction With the development of China's media industry, not only mainstream media have begun building "content matrix dissemination," but self-media users have also followed suit to create dissemination matrices. They utilize the linkage of platforms such as Douyin, Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Kuaishou, and Bilibili to create a three-dimensional dissemination matrix. However, building a dissemination matrix must focus on grasping the content models and user characteristics of each platform, as well as strengthening connections

between different platforms to create platform linkage effects. Xiao Yu Haitang's team operates Douyin as the main platform for publishing video works while also taking care of Kuaishou. However, for Xiao Yu Haitang, Kuaishou as an auxiliary platform only synchronizes videos published on Douyin without careful planning and operation—this aspect could be considered in subsequent development. In addition to synchronizing videos, Xiaohongshu also updates some graphic advertisements, which is determined by the platform's own attributes. Graphic content is more conducive to promotion and dissemination on Xiaohongshu and better aligns with the platform's user browsing habits. Compared to the commercial attributes of these three platforms, Xiao Yu Haitang's Weibo is more like a personal sharing account with less commercial advertising content, sharing daily life like WeChat Moments.

In addition to inter-platform matrix construction, several Douyin accounts related to Xiao Yu Haitang—"It's Xiao Yu Yeah," "Da Huang (Xiao Yu Haitang's photographer)," "Xiao Yu's Mom," and "Nini (Xiao Yu's old sister)"—are also in operation. Among them, the main person appearing in the "It's Xiao Yu Yeah" account is Xiao Yu Haitang herself, focusing on updating daily vlogs and beauty tutorial videos. In addition, Xiao Yu Haitang appears irregularly in the other three accounts. Through the linkage between these four accounts and the "Xiao Yu Haitang" account, the three-dimensional image of the Xiao Yu Haitang IP is enriched and perfected, making the IP image more complete and full. Simultaneously, Xiao Yu Haitang also directs traffic and interacts with these three accounts. Through real emotional connections between people, audiences can feel more authentic emotional bonds, which greatly benefits increasing fan stickiness. Through the linkage effects between different platforms and accounts, the Xiao Yu Haitang IP successfully achieves content marketing. Content marketing refers to carefully producing professional content, publishing it on different channels, using thematic content to carry life values, using life values to carry products, and having audiences accept products because they love the content [1].

Currently, Xiao Yu Haitang's business model, like that of ordinary influencers, remains at the stage of video advertising placement. Advertisers determine cooperation formats, schedules, and related issues through business contact and communication. Xiao Yu Haitang's team is responsible for scriptwriting, video shooting, and editing, which are then submitted to advertisers for review. After approval, videos can be published according to the agreed schedule. The entire commercial cooperation model is interlinked and clearly divided but relatively singular. Moreover, the format of pure video advertising placement is overly repetitive, which is not conducive to optimizing video content. Viewers easily experience aesthetic fatigue and develop rejection psychology toward advertising content, which is not conducive to advertising product sales. However, in terms of marketing strategy, Xiao Yu Haitang's short videos cleverly utilize AISAS marketing, a product of the internet era and a content marketing model adapted according to consumer behavior. It consists of five components: attracting user Attention, generating user Interest, prompting user Search, driving user Action

(purchase), and encouraging user Share.

Attracting Attention: Xiao Yu Haitang’s videos are based on the concept of “taking couple photos with 999 handsome guys,” with a novel IP format and strong content viewability, gathering massive user attention. **Generating Interest:** Xiao Yu Haitang’s video content is full of drama, with continuity between video contents. Each video can spark audience discussion, and she also invites other well-known bloggers to co-shoot, greatly arousing public interest. **Prompting Search:** In her videos, Xiao Yu Haitang uses voice-overs and subtitles to display the characteristics of advertising products. After the video goes live, the top comment in the comment section guides viewers to search for advertising products on e-commerce platforms. **Driving Action:** According to the requirements of different advertisers, some videos carry product purchase links below them. Viewers can simultaneously make purchases while watching Xiao Yu Haitang’s videos based on voice-over guidance and comment section guidance. Moreover, the Douyin platform is equipped with a “shop window” function on bloggers’ personal homepages, where viewers can purchase the same products appearing in videos, making the purchase process and procedures more convenient. **Encouraging Share:** The ability to make users share videos mainly benefits from the social attributes of the Douyin platform. Xiao Yu Haitang has gained more attention and traffic through the platform. According to QianGua Data, the comment and forward volume of Xiao Yu Haitang’s recent ten videos reached 42,000, ranking at the top in the beauty industry category.

4. Evaluation and Recommendations

As China’s premier short-video platform, Douyin provides users with a channel for content production. Users can leverage the platform’s popular topics and music to obtain traffic granted by the platform. However, how to continuously obtain massive traffic long-term is a problem faced by many users. The “Xiao Yu Haitang” account serves as a successful case of cultivating an ordinary person into a ten-million-level influencer in a short period, with many excellent points worth learning from and referencing for others in the industry.

4.1 IP Image Aligns with Popular Aesthetics “Aestheticization of everyday life” is an important cultural characteristic of postmodern society. When browsing videos, users prefer content that aligns with their aesthetics. Grasping the direction of popular aesthetics is the first step in obtaining traffic. Xiao Yu Haitang has created an IP image of an ordinary girl—sweet and cute in appearance, non-aggressive, aligning with popular aesthetic preferences. Moreover, compared to the aloofness of other influencers, Xiao Yu Haitang’s image gives audiences more intimacy, narrowing the distance with viewers. Assisted by video content, audiences develop strong identification with her while watching her videos, automatically projecting themselves into the video scenarios for association, successfully building an emotional connection between herself and viewers. When audiences develop emotional identification with the IP, they

subsequently engage in consumption.

4.2 Well-Constructed Story Framework A complete story framework not only arouses user interest but also increases content comprehensibility, reducing comprehension barriers for short-video users and improving the applicability of the videos themselves. After all, the ease of understanding short videos is an important indicator for users when choosing platforms. The character relationships presented in Xiao Yu Haitang's videos are simple, and the video content is rich but not complex. Viewers can understand the main content of each video and the general characteristics of the featured guests through simple voice-overs between Xiao Yu Haitang and her photographer, arousing user curiosity and prompting them to continue watching the videos. Through the construction of a complete story framework, Xiao Yu Haitang's personal character traits are presented, enriching the IP's personality characteristics.

However, Xiao Yu Haitang's account operation and video content still have many problems requiring improvement. For example, the account's update frequency is excessively high, blindly pursuing commercial monetization while neglecting video quality optimization. The business model is singular, advertising placements are too rigid, and video content suffers from serious homogenization. The following sections will propose relevant recommendations targeting two main issues: optimizing video content and enriching the business model.

1. Reduce Update Frequency and Optimize Video Content

Currently, Xiao Yu Haitang's update frequency has been reduced from daily updates to updates every two or three days. However, this is completely insufficient for the time needed to optimize video content. Over time, a singular video format will seriously cause user aesthetic fatigue and subsequently result in reduced fans and traffic. Moreover, the video scripts are heavily contrived, which is not conducive to word-of-mouth dissemination of the IP. As shown in [Figure 5: see original paper], ten videos updated by Xiao Yu Haitang from November 17 to December 2 were extracted. The view counts of the videos on November 15 and 17 were significantly higher than other videos. Through analysis of the video content, it was found that the content format of these two episodes was greatly different from previous patterns, breaking the previous routine of "catching handsome guys" and reducing advertising components, focusing more on storytelling. This is because audiences are filled with rejection psychology toward advertisements appearing in videos. From the perspective of video content and traffic, advertising sections reduce audience expectations for video content and video view counts.

Homogenized video content is not conducive to shaping and maintaining the IP image. Xiao Yu Haitang's team should reduce video update frequency from one update every two days to two updates per week or one update per week, leaving sufficient time to carefully optimize video content. However, during the week when no updates are made, daily life can be filmed and published through the

three accounts “It’s Xiao Yu Yeah,” “Xiao Yu’s Mom,” “Da Huang (Xiao Yu Haitang’s photographer),” and “Nini (Xiao Yu’s old sister).” Moreover, fixed update times will increase user expectations for video content, forming a habit of regular viewing and enhancing user stickiness. After reducing update frequency, the most important task is to optimize and reform video content, softening advertising placement formats based on audience psychological acceptance. Xiao Yu Haitang should enhance her professional cultivation in beauty, improving and perfecting her abilities in both makeup styling and product introduction. She should strictly control product selection for advertisements, choosing the best among advertising products, which will be more conducive to promoting beauty products and building audience trust, thereby maintaining the IP image and reputation.

2. Enrich Business Model and Create IP Brand Effect

Xiao Yu Haitang’s current business model, which relies solely on video advertising placement for commercial benefits, is too singular and flat. To pursue higher commercial benefits, she should enrich her business model, broaden commercial channels, and create a three-dimensional IP brand effect. First, open live-streaming e-commerce channels. With a fan base of 14 million, the live-streaming e-commerce business model is the general trend and the path Xiao Yu Haitang should currently take. Live-streaming products should primarily be those promoted in videos, creating linkage effects with short-video content. Moreover, because these are products recommended in videos, selling them through live streaming will also increase fans’ trust in product quality, making it easier for fans to make purchases. Second, Xiao Yu Haitang can collaborate with professional beauty bloggers or brands for IP co-branding to release co-branded peripherals or beauty products. Peripherals can be designed by professional designers with IP-related logos to create brand effects, including daily necessities such as scarves, socks, hats, or other fast-moving consumer goods. Beauty products can be planned and produced with participation from beauty brands, with Xiao Yu Haitang’s team providing IP image authorization or participating in product selection and design to achieve cooperation goals. The promotion of co-branded products can leverage Xiao Yu Haitang’s video placement format, introducing co-branded products through voice-overs. Based on fans’ identification with Xiao Yu Haitang, they will generate search and purchase behaviors toward co-branded products, yielding considerable commercial benefits.

Xiao Yu Haitang provides a relatively complete reference model for the monetization and maintenance of economic value for short-video IPs. In subsequent operations and development, efforts should focus on creating the IP’s brand effect, maintaining and enriching the IP image to obtain stable and sustained economic benefits.

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