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Forging the “MCN+Education” Path for Influencer Incubation in the We-Media Era: A Case Study of Bilibili (Postprint)

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Abstract

“MCN+Education” is currently a prominent social topic that aligns with both the online education discussions at the Two Sessions and the developmental demands of economy, technology, and society. However, with increasing user bases and mature platform promotion, the boundary between creators and users has become blurred, presenting certain difficulties and challenges for “MCN+Education”. Issues such as inconsistent quality of knowledge content and severe homogenization require urgent resolution. This study’s analysis of Bilibili’s MCN reveals a high correlation between high-quality knowledge content ecosystems and creator characteristics as well as MCN resource integration, while a gap exists between the current reality of educational knowledge content promotion and the goal of “MCN+Education” creating high-quality content and fostering a healthy industrial atmosphere. Consequently, the project proposes a plan for “MCN+Education” centered on talent cultivation for high-quality content creation, aiming to improve the system for supporting UP owners within the educational content ecosystem.

Full Text

Abstract

“MCN+Education” represents a prominent societal trend that aligns with both the online education discussions at the Two Sessions and the developmental demands of economy, technology, and society. However, as user bases expand and platforms mature, the boundary between creators and consumers has blurred, presenting significant challenges for “MCN+Education.” Issues such as uneven content quality and severe homogenization urgently require resolution. Through analysis of Bilibili’s MCN ecosystem, this study reveals that

high-quality knowledge content ecology correlates strongly with creator characteristics and MCN resource integration. Yet a gap persists between the current reality of educational content promotion and the goal of fostering a healthy industrial atmosphere through quality content creation. Consequently, this project proposes a talent-cultivation-centered plan for quality content creation within “MCN+Education” to improve the system supporting educational content creators (UP owners) on the platform.

Keywords: MCN+Education; Knowledge; Bilibili; UP Owners; Content Creation

1. Analysis of “MCN+Education”

1.1 Concept of “MCN+Education”

“MCN+Education” emerges from the rapid development of mobile communication technology and societal change, representing the industrialization and diversification of educational content production. Leveraging social media platforms and supported by MCN institutions with capabilities in packaging, traffic acquisition, and IP development, this model cultivates vertical educational creators (commonly called influencers) to deliver professional knowledge in areas such as science popularization and beauty to audiences. Unlike K-12 education, “MCN+Education” born in the self-media era extends beyond traditional subjects like language, mathematics, and English, focusing instead on the popularization and gamification of specialized knowledge. This approach features low industry entry barriers and “grassroots” creator characteristics.

1.2 Dilemmas of “MCN+Education”

Market pain points serve as the primary catalyst for shifting educational trends. Knowledge content creators constitute a major source of challenges for “MCN+Education.” Influencers with substantial traffic often fail to adequately answer questions from learning-oriented audiences, and communication between instructors and learners remains minimal. MCN institutions suffer from flawed operational management methods, with excessive focus on influencer cultivation leading to deficiencies in professional knowledge among developed talents, resulting in superficial teaching videos in certain domains. Platform entertainment orientation further compounds these issues, as education modules occupy minimal resources across multi-media platforms, which tend to prioritize entertainment-based recommendations.

Industry pain points form the foundation of educational operation mechanisms. Profit models suffer from monotonous monetization forms, with advertising content showing signs of creative fatigue, while high labor costs at MCN institutions compress profit margins. Content and copyright operations prove difficult, with uneven teaching quality and weak industry awareness of copyright protection. Managing influencers and public sentiment presents ongoing challenges,

including severe talent competition and “influencer defections.” Intense platform competition and low industry barriers have triggered explosive growth in MCN institutions in recent years, creating serious competition for traffic and resources that significantly constrains healthy industry development.

1.3 Potential of “MCN+Education”

As content expression in online discourse becomes more diversified and popularized [1], communication themes shift from elitist to mass-oriented, and public thirst for knowledge intensifies, existing knowledge boundaries begin to blur and generalize, disrupting traditional knowledge production and dissemination patterns. “MCN+Education” is expanding into a massive potential market.

From Broad to Specific: Professional Content Production Blue Ocean Awaits Development. “MCN+Education” demands a certain degree of professionalism in dissemination. While basic content can achieve wide reach across various vertical sectors, more refined explanations are needed. The “MCN+Education” model requires further development, from cultivating creator groups with deep professional knowledge and considering educational communication perspectives to deepening content professionalism and effectively addressing user questions during learning processes.

From Theory to Practice: Traffic Monetization Models Require Improvement. The long-standing concern over traffic monetization for “MCN+Education” video content finds new opportunities as user awareness of intellectual property strengthens and willingness to pay increases [2]. As major video accounts disseminate knowledge, how to achieve traffic monetization and guide user consumption by further refining and standardizing methods such as e-commerce monetization, advertising monetization, user payment monetization, and IP licensing monetization to form industry-wide recognized models becomes a new breakthrough point for “MCN+Education,” establishing monetization methodologies as theoretical support for practical implementation.

2. Bilibili’s Role in “MCN+Education” Construction

2.1 Bilibili’s Interactive Learning Ecosystem: A Fertile Environment

Bilibili stands as a cultural community gathering China’s youth, featuring a strong atmosphere for knowledge acquisition. In terms of content, Bilibili employs copyright licensing and platform self-production to enhance systematic educational output. According to Analysys, Bilibili introduces authoritative courses, professional science popularization, and industry documentaries to strengthen systematic and structured general knowledge content delivery. Community-wise, Bilibili pioneered the unique social trend of danmu (bullet comments). Statistics show that Bilibili users sent over 1.4 billion danmu in 2019 alone. The platform also developed “masking danmu” technology to prevent comments from obstructing characters and affecting viewing experience.

Simultaneously, Bilibili released the “Bilibili Danmu Network User Agreement” to strengthen danmu culture management. For UP owners, danmu serves dual purposes: as user feedback for work improvement and as a revenue-linked metric that provides income to offset content production costs. In format, Bilibili offers diverse display zones including live streaming, video, and 图文 (image-text) to comprehensively cover user needs. This multi-format content provides various learning channels while zone-based traffic drives and incentivizes creators to produce quality works. Unique among competing platforms, Bilibili not only provides UP owners with thematic tracks and general content distribution channels but also collaborates with institutions like Communication University of China and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts or co-produces animations and documentaries, using official co-productions to stimulate UP owner creation and deliver rich, high-quality resources to users.

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2.2 Bilibili' s Potential Users: A Continuous Source of Vitality

Bilibili users exhibit characteristics of youthfulness, high stickiness, high-quality demands, and learning-through-entertainment. High-quality demands refer to how upbringing environments guide Bilibili users toward high-quality knowledge needs. According to financial reports, the “Generation Z” users, born in the internet era, enjoy superior material conditions and quality education, possessing high humanistic literacy and strong creative and expressive capabilities. These high-quality learning needs drive users to click and pay for professional, quality works while encouraging professional user-generated content. Learning-through-entertainment indicates that Bilibili users prefer acquiring effective information, education, and learning within entertainment contexts. Generation Z embraces Bilibili' s encouragement of developing general knowledge content that combines entertainment, practicality, seriousness, and scientific rigor, bringing more non-traditional and diverse knowledge consumption methods. Consequently, Bilibili' s relaxed learning atmosphere and quality content may become its even brighter future highlight.

3. Bilibili' s “MCN+Education” Development Status and Challenges

3.1 Development Status

Bilibili' s “Generation Z”-dominated cultural community ecosystem has launched a strong offensive. According to Bilibili' s Q4 2020 financial report, monthly active users exceeded 200 million, showing unstoppable growth compared to 2019, with Generation Z forming the core group of Bilibili' s content creation ecology and user community culture. Additionally, a community culture for content co-creation has formed across knowledge, digital technology, lifestyle, fashion, and other sectors beyond animation, comics, and games.

Bilibili's rapid development has accumulated multi-domain commercial resources for its MCN ecosystem. Bilibili's own cultural resources provide five commercial dimensions: licensed new animation profits, gaming, Bilibili-related derivatives and cultural creative sales, official offline events, and image project investment [3]. Except for licensed new animations, the other four dimensions can integrate with MCN operations. Financial reports show that stable and rapid user growth, combined with Bilibili's unique content co-creation culture, makes traffic value the primary consideration for brand new product launches. Signed UP owners not only receive prioritized platform traffic exposure but also gain access to most of Bilibili's brand/activity resource advantages, with efforts to achieve advertising coverage from public to private domain traffic. Both parties leverage their respective strengths to collaboratively explore maximum monetization possibilities.

Investments in cultural education represent Bilibili's new examination of educational knowledge ecology within its community. On one hand, Bilibili consolidates its bargaining power in the educational knowledge track through traffic resources and distribution capabilities; on the other hand, enterprises gain opportunities to expand traffic positions and accelerate development.

3.2 Facing Problems

Despite Bilibili MCN currently possessing quality resources including cultural communities, sticky young users, and traffic positions, along with relatively sound platform management and profit models, active talent-based educational creators remain the driving force for producing quality content and community development: UP owners create high-quality educational knowledge sharing content, which attracts loyal fans, who in turn pay for works while incentivizing UP owners to continue creating. However, MCN industry development now far exceeds talent cultivation speed [4], leaving the industry facing issues such as lack of stable quality content output and mismatched work styles with community tone, creating high demand for creators' "hardware + software." This means MCNs must prioritize expanding the supply team for quality content creation.

As Bilibili maintains its industry leadership position with abundant resources and tremendous prospects on its diverse cultural social platform, if Bilibili MCN integrates existing educational and cultural resources and focuses on incubating and cultivating talent-based educational UP owners, it would hold indelible significance for quality work output in Bilibili's knowledge zone, forming a richer and deeper creative cultural atmosphere on Bilibili, and improving creative quality across the entire MCN education sector.

4. Constructing a Talent-Cultivation-Centered Plan for Quality Content Creation: A Bilibili Case Study

4.1 User-Market-Centered Quality Content Creation (Why)

Generation Z' s demand for in-depth knowledge elevates professional capability requirements for creators. This immersive network environment exerts subtle influences on their value cognition, and having received quality education, they actively capture and filter quality information from massive data, forming a cycle of user feedback, creator re-output, and further user feedback. Consequently, Generation Z' s demand for in-depth knowledge raises the bar for creator professionalism. As the future primary consumer force, Generation Z' s needs will create enormous commercial value.

As countless works drown in online competition, traffic drives UP owners to integrate community culture and focus on quality content creation. Traffic dividends drive the transformation from “users” to “creators,” sparking a wave of universal creation and submission. For UP owners, leveraging professional advantages to establish themselves in the industry while incorporating user preferences and community culture into works becomes the key to breaking through competitive encirclement.

Strengthening interactive learning fundamentals and using educational knowledge to break circles can generate more commercial value for Bilibili. Driven by users, Bilibili has become the birthplace of numerous internet popular cultures. In the long term, the highly sticky, youthful, and trending educational knowledge zone will become Bilibili' s potential stock. Furthermore, Bilibili' s unique “entertainment-learning” atmosphere, including danmu culture, hot topics, and platform “slang,” continuously attracts external users to Bilibili' s knowledge zone. Therefore, Bilibili MCN' s support for UP owner talent cultivation in quality content production, strengthening interactive learning fundamentals, and using educational knowledge to break circles can create greater commercial value for both itself and the Bilibili platform.

4.2 Four Primary Sources Supporting MCN “Input-Resource-Output” Talent Design (Who-How)

Quality content creation relies on cultivating educational UP owners. Therefore, talent design must center on innovative thinking, integrating content ecosystem value creation into interactions between users and MCNs. This study designs talent sourcing around three main groups with high professional capability reserves: “universities,” “official media,” and “grassroots UP owners.”

MCN Collaboration with Educational Investment Enterprises: MCNs regularly conduct resource activities supporting UP owners in partnership with educational investment enterprises. First, Bilibili connects with educational content ecosystem quality training and platform assessment, using creative teaching and practical creation assessments to identify potential UP owners within en-

terprises. Bilibili issues completion numbers to UP owners meeting assessment standards, enabling direct “Quality Knowledge Zone UP Owner” certification and access to resource exchange activities (secondary assessment). For Bilibili, re-collaboration with educational investors shortens talent search pathways, while “professional UP owners” receiving quality training possess greater traffic advantages and commercial value potential. For enterprises, building an MCN talent delivery bridge with Bilibili enables participation in UP owner revenue sharing while also being a process for corporate image and culture to enter public view and enhance long-term benefits. For UP owners, personal IP development receives resource support from both Bilibili and enterprises, providing not only platforms for professional advantages but also considerable income through brand advertising, live streaming rewards, and other monetization channels.

Enhanced University Partnerships for Talent Output: Generation Z constitutes the main force of general knowledge education users and creators, as well as the primary composition of current university students. This demographic understands platform ecosystem characteristics including Bilibili, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu as users; simultaneously, they are intellectually active, receiving higher education, and eager to explore trendy fields to develop specialized skills such as beauty or handicrafts. Therefore, Bilibili MCN establishes presence in major universities, conducting operational training and assessment covering creative thinking, production skills, traffic literacy, and sustained content development.

Accelerated Crossover Collaboration Between MCN and Official Media for Resource Sharing: The MCN industry is evolving toward version 3.0 characterized by crossover collaboration between commercial companies and media institutions. As a main force in integrated communication, China Central Television is accelerating its exploration of MCN integration. As traditional mainstream media, radio and television official media serve as important local information processors and external discourse communicators, as well as hubs for outstanding media professionals and producers. However, internet platforms have disrupted traditional official media’s unique information channels, accelerating the dispersion of universal traffic. Thus, MCN and official media crossover collaboration: using Bilibili as an example, official media like radio and television deliver professional quality talent to Bilibili, who obtain “Professional UP Owner” certification through platform assessment. Bilibili and official media institutions jointly launch activities combining “promoting mainstream values” with socialist core values, integrating platform resources to increase activity promotion and exposure while collaboratively building official media IP images.

Grassroots UP Owners: Though relatively dispersed, grassroots UP owners represent a significant group that cannot be underestimated. On one hand, Bilibili assists users in transforming into creators by producing targeted growth strategies for emerging knowledge zone UP owners, comprehensively covering guidance from thinking and production to traffic and growth planning. On the other hand, combining knowledge zone UP owner advantages with live stream-

ing, supplemented by guest special appearances, shapes professional talent. Additionally, incentive forms such as extra traffic exposure and Bilibili “Annual Knowledge Official Candidate” status can support UP owners’ quality content creation.

5. Conclusion

The educational knowledge UP owner talent plan is based on the demand characteristics of users, creators, MCN institutions, and platforms for quality creative content, with ultimate goals of creating quality content and integrating content ecosystem value creation into user-MCN interactions, introducing these objectives into the general education professional talent design process. The construction of a talent-cultivation-centered plan for quality content creation can be summarized as follows:

MCN institutions prioritize their own and creators’ resources and advantages when developing quality content, such as whether MCN external cooperation can connect with talent “selection” and cultivation operations, and how creators’ inherent strengths can continuously output quality vertical content works that align with platform tone and consumer preferences.

“MCN+Education” talent must possess both professional expertise in certain fields and high cultivation quality. Therefore, beyond attracting “capable individuals” with professional characteristics through cooperation, MCN institutions must provide UP owners with training and assessment on educational community content ecosystem characteristics and creator guidelines for their primary distribution platforms to become quality creators producing quality works.

Quality work creation within “MCN+Education” will enhance the “traffic monetization” capability of the educational knowledge content creation ecosystem. Currently, few creators possess high-quality knowledge and professional capabilities, and even fewer integrate platform community tone into their creations. Consequently, without an active, quality knowledge content ecosystem, despite enhanced user willingness to pay for knowledge, the knowledge payment market cannot be significantly expanded. However, forming a quality content ecosystem can generate considerable revenue through direct payment, live streaming, advertising, rewards, and other monetization methods.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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