

Analysis of Vlog Advertising Characteristics and Development Recommendations: A Case Study of Bilibili (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

The rapid iteration of new media environments and new technologies has swiftly propelled us from the era of reading images into the era of reading screens. The popularity of Vlog is an inevitable outcome of social networks, reflecting the contemporary trend of consumers shifting toward “lifestylers.” Vlog advertising, with its characteristics of personalized perspective, immersive experience, vertically segmented content in niche fields, empathetic consumption, and low-cost high-impact effectiveness, has brought entirely new experiences and revenue models to both audiences and advertisers. To ensure the positive and healthy development of Vlog advertising in the future, the government should strengthen policy guidance and regulatory oversight, platforms should enhance their own capabilities and internal management mechanism construction, creators must continuously improve media literacy and gatekeeping self-discipline, and audiences should also strengthen self-media rationality while undertaking proactive supervision. Together, multiple parties should join hands under the technological wave of the new era to create a healthy and harmonious advertising environment.

Full Text

An Analysis of Vlog Advertising Characteristics and Development Suggestions: A Case Study of Bilibili

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Abstract: The rapid iteration of new media environments and technologies has propelled us from the “era of reading images” into the “era of reading screens.” The popularity of Vlogs represents an inevitable outcome of social networking,

reflecting a broader trend where consumers are transforming into “life documenters.” Vlog advertising offers novel experiences and revenue models for both audiences and advertisers through its personalized perspectives, immersive experiences, vertically segmented content, empathetic consumption patterns, and high impact at low cost. To ensure the healthy development of Vlog advertising, the government should strengthen policy guidance and regulatory oversight, platforms should enhance their operational capabilities and internal management mechanisms, creators must continuously improve their media literacy and self-discipline, and audiences should exercise active supervision while strengthening their own media rationality. Only through multi-stakeholder collaboration can we create a healthy and harmonious advertising environment in this new technological era.

Keywords: new media environment; Vlog; Vlog advertising; short video creation; media technology

CLC Number: G2

Document Code: A

Article ID: 1671-0134(2021)08-129-05

DOI: 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2021.08.039

1. Research Background and Significance

According to the 46th China Internet Network Development Report by CNNIC, as of June 2020, China’s internet user base reached 940 million, with 932 million mobile internet users. The demographic is primarily composed of teenagers, young adults, and middle-aged to elderly users, with the “post-95s” and “post-00s” generations forming the main force of internet usage. To cater to these audiences and meet diverse needs across age groups, major platforms have further segmented their product categories for specialized production and operation. Meanwhile, driven by rapid technological advancement, evolving internet environments, and shifting consumer demands, short videos have emerged and risen rapidly, with user scale and usage time increasing exponentially [1]. Although the short video industry has demonstrated strong momentum and growing influence, the market has begun to show signs of saturation, revealing defects such as content homogenization and vulgarization that fail to satisfy young consumers seeking fresh, stimulating, and personalized content. This demand gap has catalyzed the emergence of Vlogs, which not only fulfill the needs of certain user segments but also inject fresh vitality into the market, poised to trigger another industry transformation.

Vlog advertising represents a novel advertising format that arose alongside Vlog popularity. Creators share their daily lives from a first-person perspective, promoting specific brands or products either directly or indirectly through personalized video content. Currently, top Vlog advertising creators fall into two main categories: those who gained fame through Vlog creation and accumulated sub-

stantial followings, and celebrities or influencers who already possessed large fan bases and are now expanding into the Vlog domain [2].

2.1 Definitions of Vlog and Vlog Advertising

Vlog, an abbreviation for Video Blog or Video Weblog, originated as a variant of “Blog,” meaning “video diary.” The content typically features the Vlogger (video creator) as the protagonist documenting daily life, with themes spanning broadly and characterized by personalization, novelty, and humanized elements. As an imported concept from YouTube, Vlog first emerged in 2006 when user @Bree uploaded self-shot content from her mobile phone, marking the first Vlog video. By 2012, Casey Neistat, hailed as the “Father of Vlog,” had updated his daily life for over 600 consecutive days, truly establishing Vlog as a form of life documentation. His novel and personalized content attracted massive fan attention.

Vlog’s development in China started relatively late, with early creators largely imitating foreign video bloggers in both content and format. It was not until 2018 that Ouyang Nana’s self-created Vlog “Nana Is Like This” on social platforms attracted widespread attention, prompting many to imitate her and sparking Vlog’s explosion in China. As user demand and enthusiasm grew, major video platforms intensified their support for Vlog creation. On September 18, 2018, Weibo launched its “Vlogger Certification Program,” allowing users who uploaded four Vlogs monthly to apply for official Vlogger status. In December 2018, Bilibili initiated the “30-Day Vlog Challenge,” which attracted numerous participants and laid the foundation for Bilibili to become China’s largest Vlog platform. During the 2019 “Two Sessions,” major media outlets like People’s Daily and Xinhua News Agency also launched “Two Sessions Vlog” and “Reporter Takes You to the Two Sessions” series, while CCTV later introduced “Kang Hui’s Vlog: Frontline of Major Power Diplomacy,” all contributing to Vlog’s domestic development [3].

Despite Vlog’s growing popularity, numerous challenges persist, including narrow audience demographics, small scale, content homogenization and vulgarization, and imperfect platform management and incentive mechanisms, all of which require urgent solutions.

2.2 Development Status

Vlog has achieved relatively mature development abroad, from content creation to platform review and management mechanisms, forming a comprehensive operational model. On average, over 2,000 Vlogs are uploaded to YouTube every hour. YouTube’s support has been crucial to Vlog’s success: its large existing and potential user base provides a solid foundation for rapid growth, while the platform has implemented various incentive terms and measures to stimulate high-quality content creation. For instance, top creators collaborate

with brands to integrate advertising content into Vlogs, and the platform offers “membership services” that provide users with exclusive premium video content.

In China, although Vlog shows promising development momentum with growing audiences and creators, its overall user base still lags significantly behind short video platforms like Kuaishou and Douyin. Since Vlog’s rise in China is recent, its audience concentrates primarily among the “post-95s” and “post-00s” demographics. Bilibili, as China’s largest Vlog platform, pales in comparison to Kuaishou and Douyin in terms of user scale, leaving many unaware of Vlog as a video format. Moreover, while Vlog has begun to take shape in China, much of its content mimics or even directly copies foreign bloggers, raising plagiarism concerns and gradually losing audience attention. The primary cause lies in the small user base and limited market penetration. In response, platforms are attempting to expand their user groups through initiatives like Weibo’s Vlogger certification program and Bilibili’s “Video New Star Plan,” “Video Creation Incentive Program,” and Vlog domain quality creator certifications.

2.3 Characteristics

2.3.1 Perspective Shift: From Advertiser-Led to UGC-Led

Traditional advertising production typically involves advertisers commissioning agencies or professional production teams, inherently emphasizing the seller’s perspective. Sellers usually focus on highlighting and embellishing product quality and performance, creating natural distance between buyers and sellers. For audiences, such advertisements have become increasingly ineffective over time, even producing counterproductive psychological effects. Additionally, traditional advertising channels are fixed and long-standing, inevitably causing audience fatigue. In contrast, Vlog advertising originates from the Vlogger themselves, resembling storytelling. The fan base accumulated through UGC not only avoids 反感 but actively supports and purchases advertised products. This perspective shift not only attracts audiences with its refreshing approach but also leverages fan economics to drive purchase behavior as followings grow.

2.3.2 Narrative Shift: From Data Parameters to Actual User Experience

Traditional advertising narratives are often direct “hard sells,” bluntly introducing product specifications and performance data, a format most users dislike. Vlog advertising benefits from creators’ intuitive storytelling, generating strong audience immersion and empathy. The maximum characteristic of Vlog advertising is its lifelike quality. Hard-sell advertising fails to capture attention, whereas creators’ personal experiences better trigger empathy. A creator’s in-depth product experience plays an indispensable role in influencing audience purchase decisions. For example, Bilibili beauty UP 主 @ 机智的党妹 created a video about furnishing her new home, featuring household appliances and furniture in collaboration with JD.com, which achieved millions of views on Bilibili.

2.3.3 Experience Shift: Affinity and Immersive Experience Facilitating Purchase Behavior

Traditional advertising primarily employs third-person narratives, whereas Vlog advertising is embedded within Vlog content. On one hand, creators' first-person perspective generates affinity, distinguishing it from the distance of traditional advertising. The "cloud experience" of following the creator's lens allows audiences to feel immersed as if present themselves. On the other hand, after Vlog publication, users can interact through comments, likes, shares, and danmu (bullet comments), while creators can respond via video comments, further narrowing the distance and reducing advertising resistance. For instance, Bilibili tech reviewer @TESTV integrates product reviews seamlessly into daily life, evaluating products from a user perspective and amassing a large following. @TESTV provides subjective ratings at each video's conclusion and invites audience participation, making users feel genuine care and authenticity rather than 刻板, awkward hard sells.

2.3.4 Revenue Shift: Low Cost, High Impact—Attention Monetization Through Vertical Targeting

Due to low production barriers, embedded advertising in Vlogs—even dedicated Vlog ads—cost significantly less than traditional channel advertising while generating considerable revenue. According to iResearch reports, 43.7% of audiences support Vloggers and make purchases after seeing embedded ads, rather than feeling 厌恶. This conversion rate stems from Vlog content contributions and immersive experience value. The protagonist's personal experience substantially boosts user stickiness, with many audiences becoming creators' fans, thereby naturally monetizing fan economics and enhancing advertising effectiveness.

Moreover, to capture audience attention, advertisers collaborate with video bloggers who possess specific fan groups in vertical domains. These fan demographics become target audiences for advertisers. When ads are integrated into works, the effect is multiplied, significantly increasing traffic monetization rates [4]. For example, Vlogger @ 兔叭咯, a million-follower learning zone UP 主 on Bilibili, creates content about study livestreams, medical knowledge, and postgraduate exam tips. The products featured in his Vlogs—such as exam prep courses, language courses, and snacks—align with his fan base's interests, yielding substantial monetization.

3.1 User Base: Overall Scale Remains Limited

Despite Vlog's positive development trajectory, its overall user base remains far smaller than short video platforms like Kuaishou and Douyin. Since Vlog's emergence in China is recent, its audience concentrates among "post-95s" and "post-00s" demographics. Bilibili, as China's largest Vlog platform, appears diminutive compared to Kuaishou and Douyin, leaving many unaware of Vlog as a video format. Although Vlog has begun to scale in China, much

content mimics or directly copies foreign bloggers, raising plagiarism concerns and gradually losing audience attention. The primary cause is the small user base preventing market 下沉. Currently, platforms are attempting to expand user groups through initiatives like Weibo's Vlogger certification and Bilibili's "Video New Star Plan," "Video Creation Incentive Program," and quality Vlogger certifications.

3.2 Platform: Singularity Limits Audience Reach

Although Bilibili hosts many excellent Vloggers whose works are well-received, the platform's "ACG culture" positioning inherently limits its user demographic, remaining far from YouTube's scale. Meanwhile, major domestic video sites like Tencent, Youku, and iQiyi focus primarily on internet derivatives, TV dramas, and online variety shows, with UGC/PGC content like Vlogs not constituting their main strategic direction. This makes it difficult for Vlog to penetrate deeper audience layers, severely limiting its dissemination effect. In response, Bilibili is attempting to "break the circle"—for instance, its successful 2020 Spring Festival Gala broadcast introduced many to the platform. Content-wise, Bilibili is gradually expanding its scale and diversifying types to maintain distinctive characteristics amid the short video boom.

3.3 Creators: Personal Privacy Risks

Vlog's product characteristic is authentic documentation of daily life. Vloggers inevitably capture friends, objects, and other elements during filming, inadvertently exposing real information such as location, social circles, and behavioral habits, which can compromise personal safety. This creates risks like malicious online attacks or even doxxing. Conversely, some Vloggers pursue traffic-driven economic benefits by performing dangerous or borderline activities as content 素材, posing significant safety hazards and demonstrating irresponsibility toward both themselves and audiences. Therefore, creators and audiences alike should enhance safety awareness and media literacy to jointly foster a healthy environment. For example, one Bilibili UP 主 shared an experience of being maliciously doxxed after inadvertently revealing personal information in a Vlog.

3.4 Content: Homogenization and Vulgarization Trends

As an imported concept, Vlog started late and developed slowly in China without a mature system. Both video content and filming techniques have substantial room for improvement. Excessive advertiser intervention would constrain creators' innovative thinking. Currently, most Vlog advertising on Bilibili remains limited to beauty, food, and review categories, with newcomers often copying established creators' models or directly replicating content and operational modes, leading to homogenization. To attract traffic, some creators produce violent, pornographic, "earthy," or vulgar content. With extremely low

entry barriers allowing anyone to become a creator, and imperfect platform 审核机制, vulgar content inevitably emerges.

3.5 Operations: Over-Commercialization Undermines Fan Loyalty

Vlog' s success in the internet age stems from its authenticity. Pursuing quick success and short-term profits prevents long-term Vlogger survival. Excessive commercial elements weaken content quality, reducing creators' passion while diminishing fan loyalty and goodwill, ultimately decreasing advertising effectiveness. For instance, Bilibili UP 主 @ 古月大果子 released a Vlog “Confessing Advertising Income,” with many commenters explicitly stating they “feel unhappy when favorite UP 主 s accept ads.” This forces creators to be extremely cautious, with some who haven' t accepted ads even adding disclaimers like “No sponsored content here” with prominent subtitles to avoid misunderstanding.

4. Development Suggestions

With the 5G era' s arrival, the short video industry will embrace new development. As an emerging video format, Vlog possesses significant growth potential, and Vlog advertising, as a dark horse in the advertising world, demonstrates strong vitality and commercial value. To ensure positive development, the following recommendations are proposed.

4.1 Government: Strengthen Policy Guidance and Regulatory Oversight

The government should provide supervisory guidance, improve relevant regulations, strictly standardize video and advertising content, investigate illegal advertisements, and regulate platforms and creators to promote healthy advertising industry development. Since March 1, 2020, the Cyberspace Administration of China' s “Regulations on the Governance of Online Information Content Ecology” (hereinafter “Regulations”) has been implemented, embodying President Xi Jinping' s important directive that “cybersecurity work must adhere to the principle that cybersecurity is for the people and relies on the people, protecting personal information security and safeguarding citizens' legitimate rights and interests in cyberspace.” Focusing on online information content as the primary governance object, the Regulations aim to establish a comprehensive online governance system, create a clear cyberspace, and build a healthy online ecology, highlighting the initiative of multiple stakeholders—including government, enterprises, society, and netizens—in governance, and specifying rights and obligations of content producers, platforms, users, and industry organizations [5].

Additionally, on January 9, 2019, the China Netcasting Services Association released the “Detailed Standards for Review of Online Short Video Content” and “Management Specifications for Online Short Video Platforms,” covering

21 aspects and 100 types of prohibited content in language, performance, subtitles, and backgrounds [6]. Bilibili promptly responded by strengthening video content review mechanisms, reporting systems, and reward mechanisms, achieving significant results while launching youth protection mechanisms to prevent adolescent addiction.

4.2 Platform: Strengthen Capabilities and Internal Management Mechanisms

Platforms should vigorously promote quality content, improve operational mechanisms, and assume regulatory review responsibilities to resist and penalize vulgar content while continuously enhancing platform advantages. Simultaneously, platforms must improve creator incentive mechanisms. Without stimulation, there is no motivation—domestic video platforms’ reward mechanisms remain immature, preventing creators from obtaining expected 收益 and directly leading most to 植入广告 to balance costs and 收益. Platforms are adjusting accordingly. For example, Bilibili launched the “Bilibili Creative Incentive Plan” on January 25, 2018, allowing creators to earn income through high-quality videos via metrics like “one-click triple interaction” (like, coin, favorite), comments, shares, and coins. Additionally, Bilibili’s strict content 审核机制, supported by robust review systems, is essential for building a healthy, harmonious, and stable video environment.

4.3 Creators: Enhance Media Literacy and Self-Discipline

As advertising intermediaries and information “gatekeepers,” Vloggers must continuously improve media literacy and legal awareness. While producing quality content, they should comprehensively review video and advertising content to prevent illegal and false advertisements. Vloggers must balance content and commercial interests to avoid excessive commercial 植入 and content vulgarization or homogenization, focusing instead on high-quality content production to attract audiences, cultivate fan loyalty, and properly leverage Vlog advertising’s marketing value. For instance, most Bilibili UP 主 s seamlessly integrate ads into plot development, making advertising feel natural and facilitating monetization. Moreover, sponsored content in Vlogs presents creators’ authentic experiences, with product quality clearly visible and 弹幕 feedback from other users creating a highly transparent advertising environment that continuously elevates creators’ media literacy and self-discipline.

4.4 Audience: Strengthen Media Rationality and Active Supervision

Audiences must establish correct media perspectives and enhance media literacy while respecting creators’ privacy and improving cybersecurity awareness. Regarding Vlog advertising, audiences should approach content rationally to avoid taking things out of context while exercising social supervision by consciously resisting and reporting vulgar content and inappropriate advertisements to contribute to a healthy online environment. Bilibili’s danmu system was designed

to facilitate creator-audience interaction, but malicious or vulgar 弹幕 occasionally appear, which other users can report with one click. After review, Bilibili officials impose corresponding penalties. As ordinary Bilibili users, strengthening media rationality and active supervision not only respects creators' labor but also contributes to a healthy, harmonious, and stable online environment.

4.5 Technology: “Foolproof” Operations Enable Everyone to Become a Vlogger

Technological advancement will promote Vlog' s further development in China. For pre-production, mobile phone manufacturers should enhance video filming capabilities, enabling complete Vlog production via smartphone. Technologies like “OPPO Super Stabilization” have already improved mobile video creation experiences. For post-production, while PC editing software can meet Vlog editing needs, no mobile app yet rivals PC software, leaving a significant gap that causes many users to abandon Vlog creation due to complex post-production. A feature-complete yet simple mobile video editing app is needed. Currently, quality video filming and editing apps remain scarce in major app stores, but some software like 剪映 App has begun to gain traction, allowing direct sharing after editing.

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

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