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Research on the Communication Structure and Functions of “Vlog+News” from the Perspective of Young Audiences: Postprint

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Abstract

As the practice of Vlog in the journalism field continues to deepen, the “Vlog+News” model holds significant importance for innovating the dissemination pathways of mainstream discourse and enhancing public attention, particularly among young audiences, toward mainstream media and social news. Grounded in Lasswell’s “5W” model and from the perspective of young audiences, this study conducts a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the communicator, audience, communication channels, content, and effects of news Vlogs using questionnaire survey data and online comment data, reveals the communication structure and function of the “Vlog+News” model, and proposes targeted recommendations for existing problems in current news Vlogs.

Full Text

A Study on the Communication Structure and Function of “Vlog+News” from the Perspective of Young Audiences

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Abstract: As Vlog practices continue to deepen in the news field, the “Vlog+News” model holds significant importance for innovating mainstream discourse communication pathways and enhancing public attention—particularly among young audiences—to mainstream media and social news. Grounded in Lasswell’s “5W” model and from the perspective of young audiences, this study employs questionnaire survey data and online comment data to

conduct a comprehensive and detailed analysis of news Vlog communicators, audiences, communication channels, content, and effects. The research reveals the communication structure and function of the “Vlog+News” model and proposes targeted recommendations for existing problems in current news Vlogs.

Keywords: “Vlog+News” ; “5W” model; communication structure; communication effects; young audiences

In recent years, video blogs (Vlogs) that integrate mobility, socialization, and contextualization have quietly risen in China, gaining popularity among young audiences while gradually attracting mainstream media attention. Mainstream media has attempted to broaden mainstream discourse communication pathways through the “Vlog+News” approach, a model that has gradually entered public view and achieved favorable communication outcomes. From initial trials at the 2018 Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference to standout performances at the 2019 Two Sessions, and subsequent multi-faceted applications in military parade Vlogs and pandemic Vlogs, “Vlog+News” has garnered increasing attention from both industry and academia.

As “Vlog+News” has gained popularity, scholars have begun examining its underlying rationale and communication characteristics. Wu Shanshan conducted preliminary explorations of the “News+Vlog” reporting model using Two Sessions Vlogs as examples. Xiong Ling attributes its success to shifted reporting attention and a sense of warmth that satisfies user demands for interesting, emotional content. Zhan Xuwu and colleagues argue that playfulness deconstructs seriousness, achieving authority decentralization and soft landing for hard news, noting that Vlog communication features personalized “I-narrative” expression and diverse scenarios. Chen Sha and co-authors point out that contextualized narrative breaks the serious state of news watching, with highly internet-native language narrowing the distance with users, while first-person narrative perspective facilitates transformation from conceptual communication to emotional resonance. Li Tianyi similarly believes that first-person expression and on-site detail revelation create immersive experiences. Zang Xinheng and Guo Tianxiao contend that the equal and grounded Vlog model enables audiences to gain more expectations and interest in an equal interactive state.

Concurrently, scholars like Xiong Ling have identified problems with “Vlog+News” and proposed future development directions. Xiong Ling, Zhan Xuwu, and Guo Ziyi argue that while “Vlog+News” is widely applied, the news infotainment characteristic of form over content is evident, and balancing personal life presentation with serious political reporting remains challenging. Xing Haoyue believes that leveraging Vlog’s significant social functions for real-time feedback to increase user stickiness is an urgent issue requiring breakthrough strategies in content, technology, and talent. Wang Zhe questions how to control the balance between main content length and

interesting content. Yin Chongyuan and Li Bangru identify serious content homogenization problems in current news Vlogs, emphasizing the need for creative content. Sun Yi stresses that post-production work such as editing and packaging is a critical link that cannot be ignored, and that star personalities should be cultivated in news Vlog production.

Building on existing research, this study examines the communication structure and function of news Vlogs from the “5W model” perspective, using questionnaire survey data and online comment data to conduct in-depth analysis of communicators, audiences, communication channels, content, and effects. This reveals not only the communication structure and characteristics of news Vlogs among young audiences but also holds significant meaning for empowering mainstream media to enhance younger generations’ attention to mainstream media and social news. Compared with existing literature, this paper’s contributions include three aspects: First, from a research perspective, it explores news Vlog communication structure and function from a young audience viewpoint. The “2017 Short Video Industry Big Data Insight Report” indicates that people under 30 constitute the main force of short video users, primarily aged 19-30. Combined with the research purpose of enhancing young people’s attention to current affairs, the study defines its target population as the 19-30 age group, which has not been seen in previous research. Second, regarding research content, it provides a complete discussion of all five elements in the news Vlog communication process—communicators, audiences, channels, content, and effects—offering comprehensive coverage. Third, in terms of research methodology, it combines qualitative and quantitative analysis, employing descriptive statistical analysis, text analysis, and other methods to thoroughly explore the communication structure and function of the “Vlog+News” model, providing both theoretical and empirical support.

1. Data Acquisition

The study utilizes two data sources: questionnaire survey data and crawled online feedback data from Vlogs. Questionnaire data primarily support analysis of communicators, audiences, channels, and content, while online feedback data examine communication effects using pandemic information dissemination as a case study.

1.1 Questionnaire Survey Data

Based on communication “5W” theory, social networks, new media marketing, and related theoretical knowledge, we designed a news Vlog questionnaire and conducted a pilot survey. After optimizing the questionnaire based on feedback from 50 pilot responses, we distributed it online through the Wenjuanxing platform, collecting 731 responses. After eliminating invalid questionnaires with severe data missingness, we obtained 668 valid questionnaires, yielding a 91.38% validity rate. Following data coding, entry, and processing of missing and outlier values, we conducted reliability testing, obtaining a Cronbach’s α coefficient

of 0.947, indicating high reliability. Structural validity testing yielded a KMO statistic of 0.955 and a Bartlett's sphericity test p-value of 0.000 (far below the 0.05 significance level), demonstrating high validity. Therefore, the questionnaire data quality is high and suitable for analysis.

1.2 Online News Vlog Comment Data

Using a case study approach, we examined pandemic Vlog communication effects to explore “Vlog+News” effectiveness. Considering that Weibo and Bilibili are the main dissemination platforms for news Vlogs among young audiences according to questionnaire results, we used Python to crawl 26,598 comments from four highly interactive pandemic Vlogs on Bilibili from January 22 to February 13, 2020, for word cloud mapping and high-frequency word analysis. Simultaneously, we crawled 100,000 pandemic-related Vlog comments from Weibo between January 1 and February 18, 2020, for netizen sentiment tendency analysis using the LDA model.

2. Analysis of “Vlog+News” Communicators, Audience, Channels, and Content

In 1948, Harold Lasswell, one of the founders of communication studies, explicitly proposed the communication process and its five basic components in his article “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society” —who, says what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect—famously known as the “5W model.” Its specific content in communication studies can be expressed as communicator → content → medium → audience → effect. Based on the “5W model,” this research sequentially examines the communication structure and function of “Vlog+News” among the younger generation from five aspects: communicators, audience, channels, content, and effects.

2.1 Analysis of News Vlog Communicators

Survey data reveal that 12% of respondents have experience producing news Vlogs, making them communicators. Investigation of their production timelines shows that 83% have been producing Vlogs for less than one year, with 56% having less than three months of experience. Their motivations are primarily “for fun” and “sharing” rather than “work requirements,” and almost none have professional production training. This reflects that current news Vlog communicators predominantly remain at a superficial development stage driven by interest and lacking professional skills, while the rapid increase in short-term producers also demonstrates growing enthusiasm among young people for news Vlog production.

From a production perspective, these young creators focus more on color grading, composition ratios, lens expression, and subtitle details—emphasizing expressive effects—while showing average attitudes toward script design. This indicates a current situation where communicators prioritize expressive effects over content

design. They also believe that news Vlog content suffers from high similarity and severe homogenization, with niche styles and limited distribution channels hindering development. They suggest that improving editing techniques, maintaining originality, diversifying styles, and expanding distribution channels could effectively promote news Vlog dissemination.

2.2 Analysis of News Vlog Audience

Audience analysis focuses primarily on viewing motivations, experiences, behaviors, and future development prospects. Regarding viewing motivations, up to 71.11% of respondents indicated they selectively watch specific types of videos based on personal interest, demonstrating proactive viewing behavior among the majority who seek out specific videos to understand news. In terms of viewing experience, a combined 87.11% of respondents believed that news Vlogs deepened their understanding of relevant news and sparked desire for further exploration, showing overall positive and effective news communication outcomes. Regarding viewing behavior, 70.57% limited themselves to watching only, with only 43.97% engaging in interactions such as liking or commenting, indicating that most people currently watch news Vlogs for information acquisition rather than self-expression.

In ranking factors affecting viewing interest, Vlog type, editing, and soundtrack proved far more influential than video titles or view counts, suggesting that while audience interest may be initially sparked by titles and view counts, the key to sustaining complete viewing and stimulating further interest lies in quality content. The survey also found that video duration affects viewing experience, with Vlogs under 10 minutes being more popular. Concerning the future of news Vlogs, up to 91.56% of respondents expressed optimism about their development and hope to see more news Vlogs, primarily due to the model's demonstrated sense of news authenticity, intimacy, and 趣味性. Further investigation into the sources of authenticity, intimacy, and 趣味性 revealed that authenticity mainly stems from the immersive experience created by first-person expression and on-site detail revelation; intimacy arises from the lifelike content and story-like narrative tone; and 趣味性 originates from the lively atmosphere and diverse presentation forms.

Meanwhile, through surveys of the minority holding negative attitudes, we found that "Vlog+News" faces primary challenges of infotainment tendencies and fragmented reporting content. Non-official media Vlogs may take content out of context to attract more traffic, and the first-person perspective often leads to incomplete reporting, compromising integrity and seriousness, raising concerns about form over content. In response, this paper argues that major social news can leverage authoritative media influence and reputation, touching hearts with quality content and increasing mainstream media reporting layers and depth through comprehensive multi-perspective narratives.

2.3 Analysis of News Vlog Communication Channels

To investigate primary news Vlog communication media, we surveyed both communicators and audiences about their distribution and viewing channels. Results show that over 53% of creators prefer distributing works on social platforms like WeChat Moments, QQ, and Weibo, as well as short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, primarily for life documentation and sharing. Audience surveys indicate that over 70% choose Weibo and Bilibili for watching news Vlogs, 36%-60% use WeChat official accounts, short video platforms, WeChat Moments, and QQ Space, while only about 19% watch on video platforms like iQiyi. Moreover, over 60% of news Vlog reception relies on followed bloggers or system recommendations, showing that audiences currently prefer watching recommended videos from followed bloggers on platforms like Weibo and Bilibili or videos forwarded by friends.

To further examine whether communication channels affect audience viewing intentions, we used contingency analysis to test the null hypothesis that news Vlog platforms and audience viewing intentions are independent. The contingency analysis results are presented in Table 1 .

Table 1 Contingency Analysis Results on Whether Communication Channels Affect Audience Viewing Intentions

Platform	Weibo	Bilibili	Short Video	Official Account
High Viewing Intention	27.3%	29.6%	46.9%	48.1%
Low Viewing Intention	72.7%	70.4%	53.1%	51.9%

Chi-square test results: Pearson chi-square value 222.950, corresponding p-value 0.000; likelihood ratio 236.870, corresponding p-value 0.000.

Based on the proportion of audiences watching news Vlogs on each platform in Table 1, all communication platforms can be divided into three categories: first, Weibo and Bilibili; second, short video platforms, official accounts, WeChat Moments, and QQ Space; third, video platforms. The test results reject the null hypothesis, indicating that different communication media significantly affect audience viewing intentions. The first category—Weibo and Bilibili—shows the highest audience viewing intention, while the third category—video platforms—shows the lowest. Combined with characteristics of each platform type, Weibo and Bilibili, as the most popular platforms, both benefit from broad user bases and highly convenient interactive functions that easily create heated discussion atmospheres attracting audiences. Short video platforms attract audiences due to well-developed recommendation algorithms and fast video updates, but low production thresholds and short video durations often prevent immersive news reading. Video platforms like iQiyi suffer from high advertising time costs for typical news Vlog durations and different user viewing habits across platforms, resulting in the lowest popularity.

Overall, the most commonly used and popular communication channels among young audiences are Weibo and Bilibili. Considering the significant impact of communication media on viewing intention, it is necessary to comprehensively consider factors such as social functions, user base, recommendation mechanisms, and viewing costs when selecting and building communication platforms. Furthermore, to effectively play the ideological propaganda role on the “online public opinion battlefield,” reasonable mechanisms for public opinion supervision, guidance, and management should be established to maximize news Vlog communication power.

2.4 Analysis of News Vlog Content

As the core element of news Vlogs, content was investigated to understand what audiences want to see. Using a scale of 1-5 to indicate expectation levels (where 1 means very uninterested and 5 means very interested), we evaluated five aspects: adding special task interviews or documentation, more character perspectives, more scene details, popularized/lifelike news content explanation, and increased interactive feedback. The respective scores were 4.04, 4.06, 4.05, 4.10, and 3.58. These results indicate that for future news Vlog content, people first hope to see more popularized and lifelike expressions different from mainstream media, followed by desires for more character perspectives and scene details to enrich news events, while expectations for interactive feedback are relatively lower.

Similarly, regarding future development forms, we evaluated four options: opening dedicated Vlog sections on video platforms, creating series videos for hot news events, inviting social celebrities to participate in production and dissemination, and maintaining current forms. The scores were 3.94, 4.12, 3.83, and 3.65 respectively, showing that compared to maintaining current forms, audiences prefer seeing special series on hot news, dedicated sections on viewing platforms, and hope to increase Vlog influence and appeal by creating star personalities in the news Vlog production field.

Additionally, through canonical correlation analysis, we found that the variance proportion mutually explained by “content” and “form” exceeded 90%, indicating that content and form are highly correlated and inseparable. Only through coordinated development of quality content and innovative forms can audiences receive a superior 1+1>2 experience.

In summary, “Vlog+News” content can be enriched through more popularized and lifelike expressions, more character perspectives, and more scene details. Continuous quality improvement should balance news Vlog infotainment with the seriousness and depth of news reporting itself, while avoiding severe content homogenization under the same news theme. Simultaneously, attention must be paid to the organic combination of content and form, innovating in form while improving content. Through measures such as special production of hot news, character-specific editions under special topics, dedicated platform sections, and celebrity participation, user experience can be enhanced, allowing

the “Vlog+News” communication model to demonstrate higher social value in the future.

3. Analysis of “Vlog+News” Communication Effects: A Case Study of Epidemic Vlogs

Since the 2018 Two Sessions, the COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in 2020 represents the largest-scale current affairs event tracked by the “Vlog+News” model. The emergence of numerous epidemic Vlogs—whether directly from anti-epidemic frontlines, showing pandemic conditions, or documenting home quarantine life—has played an extremely positive role in helping the public understand anti-epidemic information, share psychological states, and strengthen confidence in the “battle.” Scholars such as Jiao Liping, Zhu Xiaoguang, Zhou Nan, and Li Zheng have all analyzed Vlog’s important value in anti-epidemic communication. Here, based on big data, we conduct empirical analysis of the “Vlog+News” model’s communication effects using epidemic Vlogs as an example.

3.1 Word Vector-Based Analysis of Epidemic Vlog Comments

Based on crawled comment data from four epidemic Vlogs, we cleaned and segmented the original comment data, then created word clouds for each Vlog presented in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper] through Figure 6 [Figure 6: see original paper]. As shown, viewer comments primarily focus on the epidemic, with keywords dominated by “mask,” “epidemic,” and “N95,” while repeatedly appearing words like “hope” and “come on” demonstrate audience confidence in fighting the epidemic. Additionally, frequently appearing words such as “video” and “CCTV” reveal that epidemic videos, especially authoritative media reports, receive widespread attention and play a key role in disseminating epidemic information. Finally, creators like “Lin Chen” and “Jerry” becoming high-frequency comment terms shows that communicators positively influence news Vlog dissemination, with works by well-known Vlog creators often achieving higher popularity.

From the comment data of four epidemic Vlogs on Bilibili, we can see that news Vlogs during the pandemic not only enable audiences to understand epidemic-related information more effectively and comprehensively but also serve important roles in mutual communication, encouragement, and reassurance through “heart-to-heart” comments. Meanwhile, as scholar Sun Yi suggests, to expand news Vlog communication effects, creators need to focus on both pre-production and post-production work such as editing and packaging, and should strive to cultivate star personalities in the Vlog news production field.

3.2 LDA Model-Based Netizen Sentiment Tendency Analysis

Using pandemic-related Vlog comments crawled from Weibo, we applied the LDA model to analyze netizen sentiment tendencies during the epidemic period. Using 0 for neutral tendency, 1 for positive tendency, and -1 for negative

tendency, we employed a weighting algorithm for sentiment classification. The results showed approximately 60% of viewers held neutral attitudes, 25% held positive attitudes, and 15% held negative attitudes, indicating that overall, netizen emotions during the pandemic were relatively calm with more optimistic people, reaffirming epidemic Vlogs' positive role in guiding public opinion and soothing emotions.

From a timeline perspective, the number of Weibo posts with positive, negative, and neutral sentiments all showed significant growth after January 15, 2020, indicating that as confirmed cases rapidly increased, the number of "pneumonia"-related videos and comments also surged. Comment volumes peaked again during major news events such as Wuhan's lockdown on January 23, the Premier's visit to Wuhan on January 27, and the completion of Huoshenshan Hospital on February 2, with Vlog comment heat closely matching major epidemic news nodes, once again demonstrating news Vlogs' important role in communicating epidemic information. From the distribution of sentiment-based Weibo posts, the proportion of positive sentiment posts continuously increased along with national measures including Wuhan's lockdown, the ten-day construction of Huoshenshan Hospital, and the united anti-epidemic efforts of the entire nation, reaching its peak on February 16 when Zeng Guang, former chief epidemiologist of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, judged the epidemic's turning point had arrived. This powerfully illustrates news Vlogs' positive impact on helping people express emotions and reassure the public.

Analysis based on epidemic Vlog comment data demonstrates that the new "Vlog+News" communication model can not only help mainstream media more fully disseminate major social event information but also serve as an important tool for mass emotional expression and reassurance. For governments, since news Vlog comment analysis can reflect both the heat changes of news events and public demands and emotional expression during major public events, increasing research on news Vlog-related data can help governments grasp real-time public feedback on major social events, thereby providing decision-making references for response strategies and playing important roles in information dissemination, public reassurance, rumor refutation, and emergency response.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the "5W" model analysis of news Vlog communicators, audiences, channels, content, and effects, we draw the following main conclusions:

First, over half of news Vlog communicators have been producing Vlogs for less than three months, lack professional training, and are motivated primarily by "fun" and "sharing," indicating that current news Vlog production remains at a superficial but rapidly developing stage driven by interest and lacking professional skills.

Second, the news Vlog audience is stable, with over 70% selectively watching specific types of news videos and believing that viewing deepens their under-

standing of relevant news. More than 90% of audiences are optimistic about the future of news Vlogs, strongly approving of the model's demonstrated sense of authenticity, intimacy, and 趣味性. When selecting videos, Vlog type, editing, soundtrack, and duration are important influencing factors.

Third, creators prefer distributing works on social platforms like WeChat Moments, QQ, and Weibo, as well as short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, for life documentation and sharing purposes. In contrast, audiences prefer watching on Weibo and Bilibili, followed by WeChat official accounts, short video platforms, WeChat Moments, and QQ Space, and finally video platforms like iQiyi. Moreover, different communication platforms significantly affect audience viewing intentions.

Fourth, regarding news Vlog content, young audiences expect to see more popularized and lifelike expressions, more character perspectives, and more scene details. They also expect continuous form innovation through measures such as special production of hot news, dedicated platform sections, and celebrity participation to enhance user experience.

Fifth, epidemic Vlog communication effect analysis shows that in the all-media context, the new "Vlog+News" communication model is necessary and can achieve excellent communication effects, not only assisting mainstream media in disseminating news information more fully but also serving as an important tool for mass emotional expression and reassurance.

Meanwhile, research indicates that current news Vlogs also face problems requiring urgent resolution regarding content authority, fragmentation, and homogenization, as well as issues like single perspectives and one-sided editing that merit attention. Therefore, to ensure better development of news Vlogs, we propose the following recommendations:

First, advocate for authentic, credible, and complete filming while exploring the 趣味性 of news communication content. Build stricter, healthier video communication monitoring mechanisms that promote authentic and complete expression in news Vlogs. Simultaneously, strive to balance news seriousness with 趣味性, emphasizing both pre-production and post-production editing and soundtracking. Use authentic, quality content and novel, interesting presentation forms to "tell news well, vividly, and interestingly," arousing young people's attention.

Second, comprehensively build an efficient "Vlog+News" communication system. Fully understand current major news Vlog communication channels, optimize resource allocation, achieve focused breakthroughs and potential exploration, and expand news Vlog coverage while stabilizing key communication platforms. Maximize dissemination potential by creating excellent content and encouraging forwarding measures to build an efficient communication matrix.

Third, adopt targeted measures to minimize defects when facing problems and challenges. For example, borrow authoritative media reputation to guarantee news Vlog authority; add special columns to aggregate similar news and avoid

content fragmentation; and comprehensively display news events from different character perspectives, scene details, expression methods, and editing approaches to compensate for incomplete reporting.

Finally, to firmly capture young people' s hearts in a changing future, the industry must pay attention to young generations' ideological trends, interests, and language expressions, making timely adjustments and responses. Through comprehensive institutional arrangements and conscious value orientation cultivation by government, society, family, and individuals, we should foster youth habits of paying attention to current affairs, combining social influence with personal interest to maximize the communication effectiveness of "Vlog+News" among young audiences and help mainstream media win the initiative in guiding online public opinion.

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

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.