

# ***Research on Problems and Optimization Strategies of Chinese Women's Super Football League***

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**Abstract:** The Chinese women's national team won the 2022 Women's Asian Cup, a great opportunity to develop the Chinese Women's Football League. However, the Chinese women's football team has not received widespread attention from society. With the spread of technology, online broadcasting has become an option for more fans and an important match broadcasting and promotion area. Therefore, this paper studies the promotion and broadcasting of the Chinese Women's Super League through the literature research method, survey method, and statistics method, analyses the current situation of the promotion and broadcasting of the Chinese Women's Super League, and proposes development strategies. The Inner Mongolia Football Channel is responsible for broadcasting the Chinese Women's Super League matches. However, with the decline in the frequency of television viewing in China and the popularity of wireless internet TV, Inner Mongolia Football Channel faces low awareness and, consequently, low viewer ship. As a result, there is a need to increase awareness of the channel by bundling it with high traffic content, for example. Broadcasters of matches in the Chinese Women's Super League need to make full use of the interactive nature of the website by setting up interactive sessions such as prize draws and encouraging commentators to answer pop up questions.

**Keywords:** Chinese, Women's Super Football League, Problems, Optimization strategies.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

The Chinese Women's Super League began in 1997 and ran for 25 years, except for 2007-2010, when the league was suspended for the national team's preparations for matches. The Chinese Women's Super League is the highest level of professional football league in China for Chinese women's professional football clubs and has been growing in size. However, with the decline in the performance of the Chinese women's football team from 2010 to 2020 and the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the development of the Chinese women's football team has not received widespread attention from society, but it is facing more severe challenges.

Fortunately, the Chinese women's national team won the 2022 Women's Asian Cup, drawing the attention of Chinese fans to the development of Chinese women's football, which is a great opportunity for the development of the Chinese Women's Football League. The media is an important

vehicle in the Chinese Women's Super League's communication and has contributed greatly to the promotion of its influence. In media integration, the traditional media represented by television and the new media represented by the Internet are two major media. Therefore, this paper studies the promotion and broadcasting of the Chinese Women's Super League through the literature research method, survey method, and statistics method, analyses the current situation of the promotion and broadcasting of the Chinese Women's Super League, and proposes development strategies. It is both to seize this great opportunity and also has practical significance.

## 1.2. Literature Review

Li found that ESPN adopted a development strategy of expanding multichannel content in the TV era while maintaining an aggressive development strategy in the online era in response to the diversified characteristics of the media ecology. The inspiration of ESPN's development strategy for developing sports TV is to adhere to the principle of content first, make full use of emerging technologies, expand diversified cooperation methods and continuously strengthen strategic awareness [1].

Dong proposed that new media platforms will bring users a better viewing experience in today's era and are an important driving force for CBA tournament broadcast [2].

Hu proposed that China's Premier League broadcast should seize the development opportunity and offer fans reasonable prices. Broadcasters should pay attention to the new media market and actively respond to the challenges of other football tournaments. Broadcasters should also strengthen cooperation with government media to combat piracy [3].

Song proposed that the integration between the sports and media industries is currently not high. Therefore, the relevant companies should insist on outputting superior content, pay attention to the platform's operation, and focus on the production of content and brand development. Platform output should focus on the diversified needs of fans, create multiple types of self-produced programs and attract new users by improving the user experience. Other sports media enterprises should develop their integration model according to their characteristics [4].

## 1.3. Research Gap

Most scholars have studied the broadcasting of well known sports brands, such as CBA and the premier league. But less research has been conducted on the current situation and development strategies for promoting and broadcasting the Chinese Women's Super League. Therefore, this paper will discuss the current situation and development strategies of the Chinese Women's Super League in two main sections, hoping to fill the gaps in the relevant research.

The Chinese Women's National Team winning the 2022 Women's Asian Cup has led to a continued increase in interest in women's football among Chinese fans, which is a great opportunity to develop the Chinese Women's Super League. However, the current level of interest in the Chinese Women's Super League is still low, and there are still many problems with the promotion and broadcasting of the tournament. Therefore, this paper will analyze the current situation and development strategies of the Chinese Women's Super League to increase Chinese fans' attention to women's football and explore the operation mode with Chinese characteristics.

## 1.4. Research Framework

This paper first analyses the data obtained from the questionnaire to analyze the general situation of Chinese people watching television today. The paper then uses literature research, survey, and statistics to study the promotion and broadcasting of the Chinese Women's Super League. With the "5W" communication model proposed by Lasswell as the framework[5], the current Chinese Women's Super League analyzes the main body, mode, content, audience, and effect. This study

sums up the current status of the Chinese Women's Super League in terms of event broadcasting and the problems existing in the mode, content, and effect.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Survey Method**

The investigation and research method refers to obtaining relevant materials directly through investigation, understanding the objective situation, and analyzing these materials. This paper will point out the current situation and development strategies for promoting and broadcasting matches in the Chinese Women's Super League. And this study will provide an analysis of Chinese people's overall television viewing and online platform usage preferences so that the attention of the Chinese Women's Super League can be increased.

### **2.2. Literature Research Method**

The literature method is a method of understanding and proving the object of study through literature review. In this paper, literature review, data collection, and further collation of the information collected are carried out through various domestic and international literature websites for thesis writing. At the same time, the research on the broadcasting of sports events in China and many works and research results on sports, journalism, and communication, sports marketing were reviewed to lay the foundation for the thesis writing.

Media content and services have long been a high profile component of the sports industry. The media is an important vehicle in the Chinese Women's Super League's communication and has contributed greatly to the promotion of its influence. In media convergence, the traditional media, represented by television, and the new media, represented by the Internet, are two important media.

## **3. Mode**

### **3.1. Current Development of TV Broadcast of the Chinese Women's Super League Matches**

The Inner Mongolia Football Channel broadcasts the Chinese Women's Super League matches.

Football Channel is the first professional TV channel to promote the cause of football reform in China, approved by the National Radio and Television Administration.

In 2017, the State Physical Culture Administration and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region joined hands to create the "Football Channel". The State General Administration of Sports and the People's Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region will work together to promote the launch and landing of the football channel, the construction of office space, and team building.

On 29 March 2018, the football channel was officially launched in Beijing and has already achieved coverage in 29 provinces and regions nationwide [6].

### **3.2. Problem Identification: The Low Viewership of Football Channels**

However, in the course of data collection, it was found that the football channel was poorly known. The questionnaire was therefore designed to focus on television as a traditional medium. The survey returned 211 questionnaires, with a gender ratio of 2:3.

64% of the respondents watched TV less than once a week, and 77% felt that their TV frequency was decreasing. This confirms that television is losing its hegemony in the media ecosystem with the widespread use and expansion of digital technology in the Internet era.

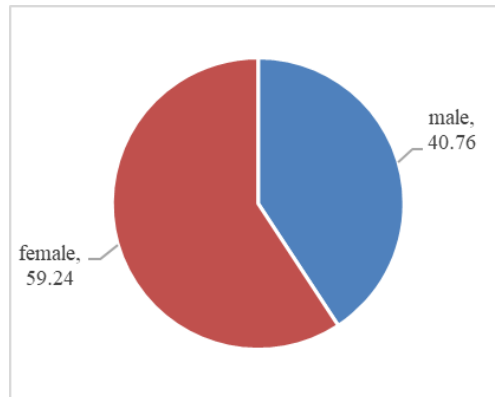


Figure 1: Gender.

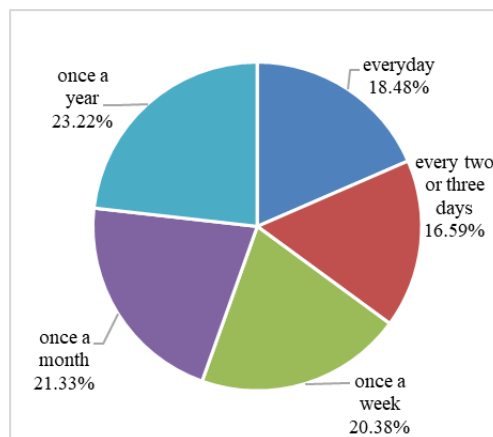


Figure 2: Frequency of watching TV.

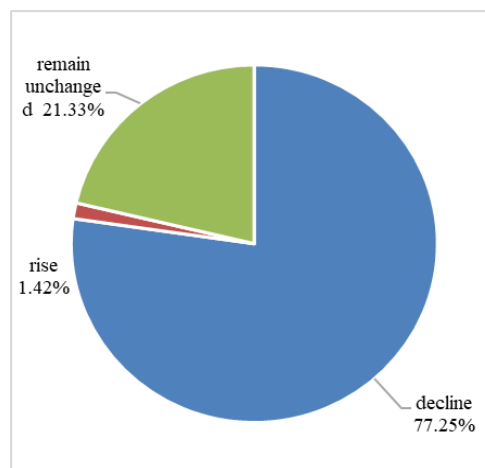


Figure 3: Changes in frequency of watching TV.

In general, fewer people are watching TV, which is the first reason for the low viewership of football channels. Seventy percent of people say they use wireless internet TV rather than traditional cable TV. Sixty-three percent of people also prefer to use the on demand function and directly choose to watch their favorite content, such as a particular TV series, rather than watching a particular TV channel. These two figures show that wireless internet TV is already popular in China today and that

football channels, as a traditional cable channel, are difficult to access in people's real life TV viewing. As a result, fewer people are watching cable TV and live TV channels, which is the second reason for the low viewership of football channels.

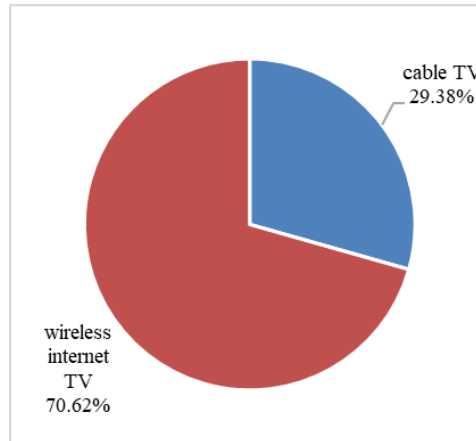


Figure 4: Types of television.

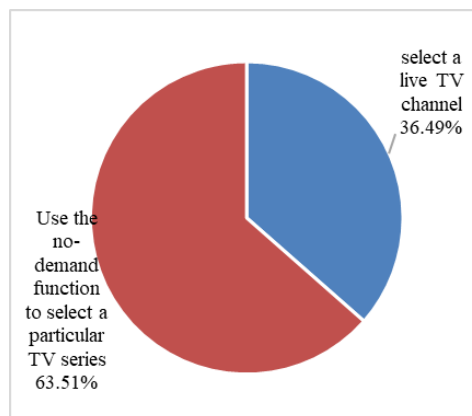


Figure 5: The way to watch TV.

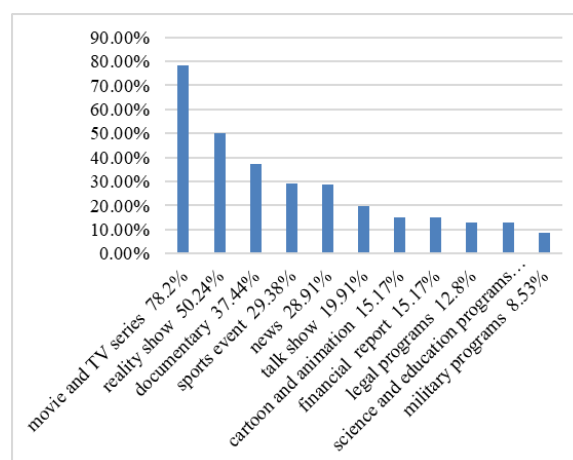


Figure 6: Preferred TV programmes.

As for preferred TV programs, only 30% of people chose sporting events. The two most popular choices were movies, TV series, variety, and reality shows. Seventy-eight percent of people chose films and TV series, and 50 percent chose variety, reality shows. Therefore, Chinese people are not very enthusiastic about sports events, and most people do not choose sports events when they watch TV. This is the third reason for the low viewership of football channels. This is a direct result that only 8% of people chose yes to whether they had heard of the football channel.

This is a direct reason that only 8% of people chose yes to whether they had heard of the football channel. At the same time, nearly 40% of people think they would like to watch matches on the Football Channel. Therefore, the Football Channel has a large potential audience to explore and needs to be made known to them through constant promotion.

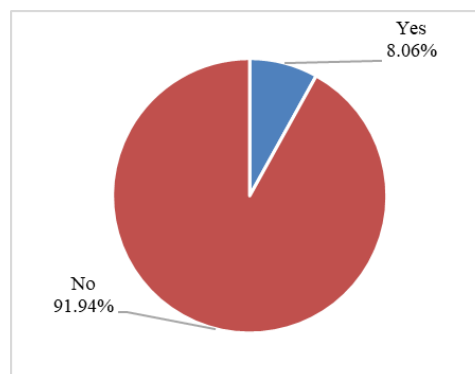


Figure 7: Heard of the Inner Mongolia Football Channel.

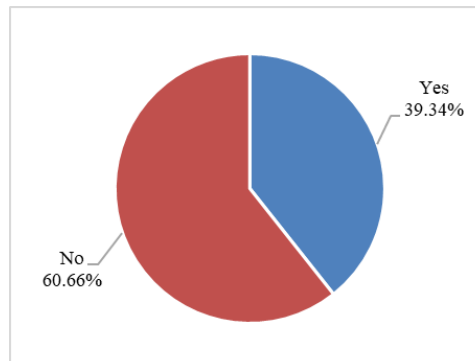


Figure 8: Willingness to watch matches on the Football Channel.

### 3.3. The Online Communication Aspects of the Chinese Women's Super League

With the development and spread of media technology and improving people's living standards, Chinese users' media consumption choices have shifted towards new media. Producers of sporting event media content should focus on the supply of digital and social media content to seek a wider user reach.

Therefore, the questionnaire also addresses the online communication aspects of the Chinese Women's Super League. On the question of which applications are used to know information and get news, 85% of people chose WeChat, 50% chose Weibo, 43% chose Tik Tok, 31% chose Headline, 28% chose Bilibili, 23% chose Xuexi, and 17% chose other news applications. Chinese people's access to information is characterized by diversity.

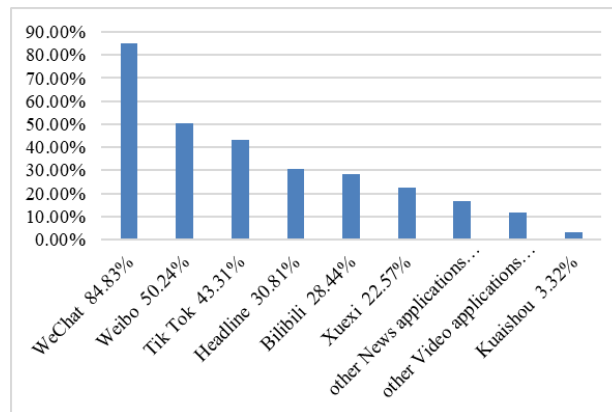


Figure 9: Preferred applications to get information and read the news.

Whether you see information about the Chinese Women's Super League on these apps, 47% chose rarely, 44% chose occasionally, and only 9% chose often. This shows that the Chinese Women's Super League is still facing problems in online communication.

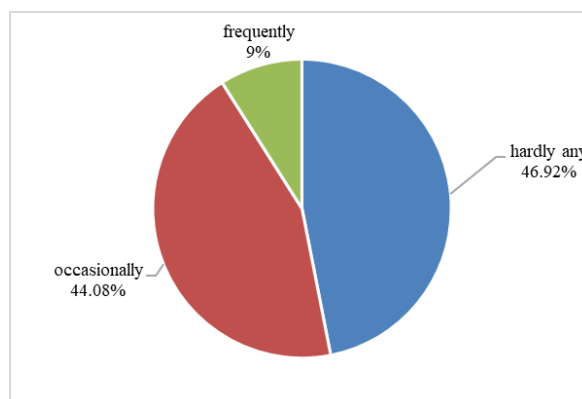


Figure 10: Frequency of reading the news about Chinese Women's Super League on these applications.

According to data released by I Research, the rate of football viewing via mobile on new media platforms has reached 53% during the 2018 World Cup. [7] Convenience is the biggest advantage of mobile viewing, helping users break through viewing time and space limitations. There is a high degree of uncertainty about when and where fans can watch matches. Mobile provides a more convenient way for fans to watch matches. Therefore, the broadcast of Chinese Women's Super League matches should focus on mobile to meet the viewing needs of users on all platforms.

According to the Chinese Women's Super League statistics on the official Chinese women's football Weibo [8], the broadcast of the Chinese Women's Super League matches covered 23 live platforms in 2021. However, the figures for the total number of viewers and the average number of viewers per game are still low. This indicates that many fans still do not know how to watch the Chinese Women's Super League matches. As a result, the Chinese Women's Super League needs more publicity to let fans know how to watch matches.

Socializing is a basic need for human survival. The rising need for human socializing has become a major trigger for technological advancement. Building social relationships on online platforms have accelerated the surge in active online users. According to "2022 China Social and Content Marketing Trends", the number of monthly active users of WeChat, Tik Tok, and Weibo, the three major social platforms, reached 1.25 billion, 650 million, and 570 million, respectively, year by year. [9] With its



huge user base and the characteristics of user initiative and selective access to information, social media has become an important channel for information dissemination in recent years. On Weibo, Tik Tok, and Headline, the Chinese Women's Super League has created official accounts and has 450,000, 840,000, and 100,000 followers. However, there are no official accounts on other platforms, such as WeChat and Bilibili, with many monthly active users. This means that those who only use WeChat or Bilibili cannot learn about the Chinese Women's Super League news.

### **3.4. Recommendation for Mode**

#### **3.4.1. Providing Televised and Online Broadcasts**

The football channel should stick to providing televised and online broadcasts in terms of broadcasts.

The football channel can cooperate with local TV stations. For example, if there is a Jiangsu team playing, the TV channels in Jiangsu province could be allowed to broadcast the content of the football channel. Because people have a sense of belonging to a region, Jiangsuese will be interested in their team's matches, attracting more people to the football channel. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the channel is picked up by cable TV across the country.

#### **3.4.2. Cooperate with Wireless Internet TV**

The football channel could work with wireless internet TV to bundle sports with other content for sale.

ESPN+ has partnered with Hulu and Disney+, which have more than 10 million followers, to attract audiences in other areas, and the three have joined forces to offer a \$12.99 monthly package. Within 1 month of the package's launch, ESPN+ subscriptions had risen from the original 2.4 million to 3.5 million[1]. This is an example that football channels can learn from.

#### **3.4.3. Make Full Use of the Interactivity of New Media Platforms**

In the era of mobile connectivity, fans' engagement with football events is beginning to shift online, and the Covid-19 has accelerated the shift to online [10]. As a result, online broadcasting will be the focus. The Chinese Women's Super League needs to ensure that it has official accounts on all platforms to post-match information and relevant news to expand the reach of the tournament. At the same time, it is important to ensure full platform coverage of match broadcasts to give fans maximum convenience.

The touch screen capabilities of smart mobile devices make mobile viewing more interactive. Therefore, it is important to use this advantage in broadcasting matches on the web segment. For example, there can be interactive sessions such as prize winning competitions and lucky draws to attract fans to watch the matches.

Broadcasters of Chinese Women's Super League matches should use the interactivity of new media platforms, such as Weibo, to interact with users during the broadcast process. Through Weibo, they can publish previews of matches, live matches, team player updates, self-produced programs, and other relevant content to draw users' attention to the matches. Whenever there are exciting moments or key moments on the field during the match, the new media platform selects the match footage and generates a short video, combining it with text to describe the match information, and releases it through Weibo in the shortest possible time. Fans browsing the Weibo site will be able to access the real time match situation and see the live match footage. At the same time, a link to the broadcast is added so that users can click on the link and jump directly to the broadcast interface to watch the match. The combination of text, images, and video will provide a more vivid image of the match to Weibo users and attract their attention.



## **4. Content**

### **4.1. Current Development of the Content of the Chinese Women's Super League**

Currently, the Chinese Women's Super League content is rather homogeneous during the broadcast of matches. There is only commentary from the commentators on the matches, which is less interactive. The commentators' voices are not clear enough, and the live sound is loud while the voices are low. At half time, advertisements are shown, which lack entertainment and do not attract viewers.

On social media platforms, the official account of the Chinese Women's Super League posts regular content such as match previews, line ups, match reports, and highlights. Off field content such as player interviews are also posted, but the content is small and varied.

### **4.2. Recommendation for Content**

#### **4.2.1. Pay Attention to the Existing Habits of Fans**

According to I Research, fans are more likely to engage with the game in a variety of ways, putting their efforts into the pre match, mid match, and post match stages: before the game, they collect information through pan sports content aggregators; they watch the game through long form video, TV media and other channels; and after the game, they discuss and share with other fans through pan sports content aggregators and social media platforms.

Among the pan sports content aggregators, Dongqiudi is popular among fans for its comprehensive content and has active users, with most of them opening it every day and using it for an average of nearly half an hour per person per day, mainly for viewing highlights of matches and information about their favorite teams [10].

Chinese fans use a variety of platforms for different purposes, so the Chinese Women's Super League needs to pay attention to the existing habits of fans and target its content in the process of promoting the matches. There are a large number of active users on the Dongqiudi platform. Therefore, the Chinese Women's Super League should also have an official account and promotions.

#### **4.2.2. Make Fans Feel Involved**

In 1954, Schramm proposed a relationship between communication and feedback between the mass media and the audience in the mass communication model. However, in the process of mass communication, the traditional media has always dominated the transmission of a large amount of information to the audience. Although the audience, an individual with the ability to act and take the initiative, can give feedback, the real feedback ability of the audience is extremely weak due to the limitations of the feedback channels and timeliness. With the increase of feedback channels and feedback forms in the network era, the speed and timeliness of feedback are also greatly enhanced. In the new media era, the two-way nature of information dissemination makes the audience act as the receiver of information in the communication process. Still, the audience can also play the role of information disseminator [11]. Nowadays, the audience's demand for watching the broadcast of events is not only limited to the live event itself but also tends to participate in activities that can enhance the sense of participation and immersion, such as interaction, sharing, and experience. Therefore, creating rich scenarios and optimizing interactive gameplay to attract more audiences to participate in the event has become an issue that all platforms must consider in the event's broadcast.

As a right granted to fans of sports events, sending comments and pop ups has become the most widespread form of interaction in the broadcast of various events. The emergence of pop ups has changed how communication has always been fixed between the communicator and the recipient and

has also increased communication and feedback timeliness. As a result, commentators can focus more on reading and giving pop up feedback during the broadcast. In this way, not only can questions from fans be answered, but the commentators can also understand what the fans are saying and further satisfy their needs. Pop ups allow interaction between users and commentators and provide a communication link between fans, who can send their personal views to “talk” to fans at the same time and space on the game screen. By sending pop ups with their views, fans can “talk to fans in different spaces simultaneously” during the game, finding fans who share their views and satisfying their personal need for recognition and engagement.

#### 4.2.3. Set Up Fun Sessions Such as Lucky Draw

Prize based interaction has always been the most engaging form of interaction in sports broadcasts. Simply having a prize in the interaction can be a great motivator for users to participate. Therefore, there can be quizzes and lucky draws in broadcasting events.

#### 4.2.4. Explore Fans' Need

The diverse needs of fans need to be further explored. The anecdotes on the field of play and the life of the players off the field are also topics that fans are concerned about and eager to learn about. Therefore, the Chinese Women's Super League needs to produce a variety of video formats, including team documentaries, indepth interviews, and quick questions and answers to meet the needs of different fans.

A live player link section already allows fans to interact directly with the players. Live video is needed to give fans who miss the live stream the opportunity to watch it back.

Live content and other entertaining content can also be edited into short videos to be shown during the interval to enrich the flow of the program. It would also allow viewers to learn more about the Chinese Women's Super League while watching the exciting matches.

### 5. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the Inner Mongolia Football Channel is responsible for broadcasting the Chinese Women's Super League matches. However, with the decline in the frequency of television viewing in China and the popularity of wireless internet TV, Inner Mongolia Football Channel faces low awareness and, consequently, low viewership. As a result, there is a need to increase awareness of the channel by bundling it with high traffic content, for example.

With the spread of technology, online broadcasting has become an option for more fans and an important match broadcasting and promotion area. Broadcasters of matches in the Chinese Women's Super League need to make full use of the interactive nature of the website by setting up interactive sessions such as prize draws and encouraging commentators to answer pop up questions. At the same time, fan demand needs to be further explored. In terms of tournament promotion, it is important to produce the type of videos that fans like.

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