Analysis of the Monetization of Vtuber via Comparing with Real Human Streamers

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Abstract: With the development of technology, most things in life have become virtual, even Internet celebrities. They transferred to the so-called Vtuber. This paper researched the origin of Vtuber and analyzed their success in the aspect of technology and cognition. The aim of this essay is to investigate the environment that Vtuber was born in, and the factor of success in monetarizing of Vtuber when they seem to be unreal through document research and case study. This paper has found that the Vtuber is the result of the maturity of various industries, including but not limited to 3D technology and the live streaming industry. The reason for its popularity is Vtuber's non-human liked perfectness, limitless and human-liked affinity.

Keywords: Virtual influencer, Vtuber, Live streaming, Avatar

1. Introduction

Fancy an image and paying money for it seems to have always been a pattern of human behavior. From the early days of carefully packaged eye candies to the social media influencers, and then to the Vtubers. Barriers to entering the industry are lower, but their ability to monetise seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. Undoubtedly, as a virtual character, the appearance, which needs to be formed innate, the thing that needs to be carefully maintained is no longer a necessary requirement. Because as virtual influencers, their appearance is achieved through 2D painting and 3D modeling. They are totally built on existing user demand. The rigid buyer's market principle of "meet user needs" is fully implemented.

Although virtual artists have been here for a long time, recently, Vtuber seems bursted out from the entertainment industry. A piece of online news reported that Famous Vtuber entering Bilibili. In the first hour of its debut, 1 million gratuity was achieved[1]. The sudden popularity and huge revenues behind it, made the industry of virtual entertainment grab everyone's attention. However, most people seem to have no clue about the term "Vtuber", the culture behind it, and most importantly, the way they monetize. The purpose of this paper is to explain the origin and transformation of Vtuber. Give a clear understanding of Vtuber via comparing real human streamers and Vtubers. Eventually, a prediction will be given based on current data. In another word, the paper aimed to introduce and explain some basic information about Vtuber and how they work in the market. It means to help anyone who has an interest to dive into the deeper field as a guide

through these following sectors: the origin of Vtuber, the technical factor, and the cognitive factor of the Vtuber's success.

2.   The Origin of Vtuber

The technology behind vtubers has existed for a long time. They were used in scientific research very early on. But Vtuber really came to our attention when these technologies became entertaining and accessible. The democratized technology became the main reason for virtual artists other than democratization but also due to the cheaper price[2]. It makes more people afford it so that there can be so many Vtuber[3]. Huang states in his essay. Besides the development of technology, the boost of streaming platforms also played a major role. The name of Vtuber stands for virtual youtuber. There are other platforms, like twitch, NikoNiko to be the major base of Vtuber. Include but not only these platforms changed their layout to adapt to the huge demand for live streaming, but also bilibili, the platform in China, created a specialized section only for Vtuber.

Technology aside, what brings up the idea of Vtuber is another thing that we need to investigate. Avantor, another name for Vtuber and other virtual influencers, was said to be from the religion. In Hindi, the meaning of it is "The etymology of the term avatar enters in the conjoining of the prefix ava, meaning "away, down or below." The suffix tar means "to pass or cross over," forming the word avatar, which generally translates as "(re-)incarnation"[4]. It is where the avatar shows its feature of deity and perfectness.

3.   The Technical Factor of the Vtuber's Success

Huang believes that If the world is split into two parts, reality and virtual reality. Then the Vtubers filled up the space in between[3]. Jiang commented on Fembot's popularity that As an artist, Vtuber's life is the definition of success, a live walking rule of glamor. A number of complex media operations have been put in place to support her international renown[2]. Just as mentioned before, the world avatar shows deity and perfectness. The Vtubers the apprentice that everyone likes through the help of technology. Garriott said in the interview that there is no longer any requirement on the "born with" appearance and physique. In addition, they are less likely to make mistakes, as there is not only one person but a whole group or even company operating the character. In that circumstance, the avatar represented a god's earthly appearance in bodily form[5].

Their godlikeness is not limited to their physique and appearance, but also, they are free from barriers and both physical and mental issues. This became an advantage beyond real human influence, they can maintain at a stable content creating speed. Like the virtual influencer LilMiquela "visited" a deli for an advertised performance while COVID-19 was spreading[6]. While COVID-19 does bring a recession in the real-human entertainment industry. On the contrary it is an opportunity for Vtuber. People have more time to spend staying home to watch live streams. Meanwhile, Vtubers are not limited by the location they are filming. They did seize the opportunity, the virtual streaming industry. According to the data collected by a website called socialblade, the subscription rate of the top 5 Vtuber on YouTube has increased from the range of 5,000-10,000 a week to the range of 50,000-100,000 a week[7].

4.   The Cognitive Factor of the Vtuber's Success

However, the virtual idol's digital birth does not limit her to a life that is just online. Her existence merges the virtual and the real, shattering the barriers between cyberspace and the rest of society by integrating cyberculture into "mainstream" popular culture[2]. Jang's comment on Fembot apply to all the Vtuber too.

The god-likeness has drawbacks, they are too perfect to believe. To remove the gap, Vtuber is usually, human-like, in the aspect of their outlook, action, and behavior. People may now engage with virtual characters more easily thanks to the projecting of real-world gestures to virtual avatars[8]. J.Aron explained the reason for Vtuber's success in terms of their body language. This makes people believe they are the same or at least similar, putting them into a so-called "we" group.

In the study of Lu et al, some interviewers think that materials released based on Vtubers' daily life enable viewers to connect with them more readily than usual anime characters[9]. Some others argued that they are willing to donate to Vtuber although they would not do the same thing to human streamers. They claimed gifting virtual items to Vtubers has the same feel as buying virtual items for video games[9].

The interactive message sent during the stream can increase the engagement between the audience and Vtuber by increasing the audience's social presence and trust. This statement has been posted by Kruikemeier et al in their research about the effect of a personalized and interactive feature on communication[10]. At the same time, another research by Guo does claim the same thing that audiences who worship virtual idols find a way to hide the self within the boundary between the real and the virtual and thus get a sense of achievement and accompany[11].

On the other hand, emotional content can stimulate the formation of social presence and trust too[12]. For example, emojis, hearts, and gifts. These can all trigger positive emotional reactions as they are the representation of the support and liking of the audience toward Vtubers. In another research by Lv, Jie, Cong Cao, Qianwen Xu, Linyao Ni, Xiuyan Shao, and Yangyan Shi., it has also been proved that in the virtual environment the user does tend to receive more visual stimulation than in a real environment[13].

Jiang explained the strategy that Vtuber used to make the fans stick to them tightly. People create a fandom, to name the fandom to show their recognition by naming their fandom. The virtual artist gave fans a name, and it makes use of "self-branding" to cultivate fan devotion. As a marketing strategy, it entails promoting a person's reputation and abilities by making them into an "established brand." Through their connections with their followers, superstars develop a relationship of "parasocial interaction[2]. Planting feelings of identification, friendship, and intimacy among fans. In this way, fandoms feed into the lives of virtual idols by creating different sorts of online content. and this actually brings up another main factor that the Vtubers are relied on.

Jiang gives the reason why Vtuber needs the active participation of their fans. The definition, characteristics, significance, and values of the virtual artist's digital aura are always changing since they can only be preserved by being continuously renewed (and, in a sense, updated) by the audience's active participation[2]. Their participation includes but is not limited to watching streams, creating fan arts, etc. Creating the image is longer the business of just the influencer, but also the fandom's. In another word, fandom, themself and their reaction are the keys to opening the door of success for Vtuber. No longer the content Vtubers create.

It seems logical that it would trigger people's curiosity due to people are naturally curious about things that they have never seen or experienced before[3]. Simultaneously, Mancuso postulates virtual creation that allows them to get away from reality, and freely explore the genre and content they would not try in the real world[14]. In fact, these breakthroughs can be a new positive stimulation to the audience.

In order to understand the success of Vtuber, then the rule of games shall be clarified. For example, YouTube. Other than paid live stream, YouTube also opened a section of SuperThanks and subscription, forming a new method to support the channel they like aside of SuperChat. On platforms like Twitch and Facebook, there are also some alike functions[3]. Huang explained. As we can see platforms abandoning the paid living stream but providing more optional supporting

functions, as now, the great majority of user-generated material is made available to viewers for free. The viewers are not required to support the livestream host. Supporting Vtuber becomes a challenge rather than a task[3]. Huang stated. People's willingness to spend increases when given a choice, but the opposite is true if they are forced to spend.

In terms of marketing, the model for launching Vtuber is to find the most suitable frame and maximize the quality. After that, it will be adjusted according to the market demand of the feedback provided by fans. They are perfectly shaped by the demand of consumers. They are the exact figure consumer long.

5. Conclusion

This paper focused on the origin of Vtuber and analysis of their two factors of success--the technical factor and the cognitive factor. This paper found out that technologically speaking, Tuber is the product of rapid development of technology and market, cost civilianization, and surging demand. Cognitively, Vtuber is a medium to fill the virtual and the real, and it is people's beautiful fantasy of perfection and closeness.

This paper only used document research to discuss the industry of Vtuber overall, but very limited on case study, as do detailed analysis based on focused cases. In future studies, the modification can be choosing several specific cases of Vtuber to investigate their features of success.

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