

Communication Effect of Lifestyle Vlog: A Comparison between Chinese and Foreign Digital Media

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Abstract: In 2012, YouTube had its first vlog. Until 2018, it developed in China and became popular among young people. With the advantages of individuation, original taste and visualization, logs can meet the diverse needs of the audience. This study selects lifestyle vlog as the research object, analyzes the communication content, mode and effect, and selects Chinese and foreign social media platforms for comparative analysis to find out the similarities and differences among them. According to the research results, the log content does not vary from country to country. It can bring knowledge, satisfy curiosity, and entertain people.

Keywords: vlog, YouTube, Bilibili, communication effect, social media

1. Introduction

With the increasing popularity of mobile phones and tablet, vlog (Video Blog) has become a new type of video, replacing pictures or words [1]. The first vlog appeared on YouTube in 2012. Youtube is officially defined as a personal video, which is characterized by someone speaking directly into the camera. At present, among all kinds of short videos, vlog is in the rapid development stage. Video blog, as a social, entertainment, personality expression, has become a mainstream way for the younger generation to record their lives. Meanwhile, vlog sets personal expression into public discourse, thus completing a collective onlooker of self-expression in video.

Existing research on vlog largely focused on its authenticity, characteristics, and effect. Surprisingly, lifestyle vlog types analysis and a comparative study in vlog between China and Western Countries have not given too much attention. In reality, lifestyle vlog has a great influence on group psychology and cultural construction. Burgess Jean and Joshua Green indicated that the most popular content on YouTube is not old videos that are transported or copied, but created by users themselves [2]. User-generated content has become the biggest feature of vlog. These original logs have an increasing influence on the social groups and society. In addition, compared with foreign markets, China started late and the first Vlog bloggers in China attracted wide attention at the end of 2018. However, more vloggers exist in China than in the US [3]. This is an interesting finding that deserves further study.

Therefore, the main aim of this study is to investigate the communication effect of lifestyle vlog. It pays attention to the differences between China's Bilibili and foreign YouTube. The paper has been divided into five parts. The research begins with the introduction and literature review. Then, this article mainly uses case analysis and observation. Firstly, it selects relevant cases for content analysis,

and then compares the differences of content production modes between YouTube and Bilibili. Finally, it discusses the influence of Vlog on users' cognition, psychology and behaviors from three aspects of uses and gratifications theory. In this study, the propagation effect of vlog on users and platforms was comprehensively reviewed. Finally, the shortcomings of the study are summarized, which provides the direction for the follow-up study.

2. Literature Review

The authenticity of vlog is the main reason why people interact, create and spread information on social media platforms. In the process, viewers build trust with content creators and are influenced by them [4]. Researchers are more and more interested in the authenticity of vlog. Informed by Jintian's research, vlog's changes for young people aged 16-18 mainly focus on learning new knowledge, changing their concept of things and make them relax. In addition, he pointed out that youths would not blindly follow vloggers' content and opinions, which influence them, but not much [5]. In fact, vlog is similar to reality TV. By studying comments on videos produced by Valeria Lipovetsky on YouTube, people don't like professional video shooting, only ordinary and intimate relationship can make the audience feel real [6]. Vlog is to watch other people's daily life through the screen, which will make the audience have a sense of belonging and identity. However, a study put forward the opposite view that vlog is an unreal social landscape, which is created by media technology based on aesthetic symbols in consumer culture. Yun Fan proposed the concepts of "Performance" and "Masking" under short videos, and believed that all content in vlog is only the content and atmosphere that the video producer wants to express, which is not true and forged [7]. This can cause the audience to lose their understanding of reality and the media and get caught up in it. Therefore, it can be seen that most vlog content itself has positive communication value, but the virtual world it builds allows people to escape from real social life.

People who create short videos on the website are often called Vloggers, bloggers, or influencers. Studies on the impact of vloggers have focused on the last five years. Some scholars considered that the criteria for evaluating the influence of a vlogger are: background, appearance, popularity, emotional attachment and so on. The interaction of influence can be divided into the number of comments, favorites, likes, followers [8]. This study will also take into account this standard. Conversely, Weinzimmer mentioned The New York Times reported that a company called Devumi has been investigated for selling millions of fake social media followers to celebrities, actors and entrepreneurs in 2018 [9]. The number of follower is very important to the so-called opinion leaders. Advertisers are spending billions of dollars a year as fashion bloggers and YouTube stars become a new advertising market. The more influence opinion leaders have, the more money they make. These are called "influence economy". The research suggested that vloggers get wealth and influence from their viewers and have a positive impact on video audiences. A large and growing body of literature has investigated the market influence of vloggers on online consumers. Given the problem of online video being more influential than traditional media in Wright's work, young women aged 18-24 say vloggers have more influence on their decisions than journalists [10]. In a news reports, due to certain restrictions, journalists may lack a true view of the product. But bloggers on video sites give viewers a more professional sense of identity. And they share their recommendations with you as a friend on camera. Then, in a study of the influence and intentions of vloggers on luxury brands, when audiences and vloggers share similar values, consumers are more likely to believe and are more willing to buy. Some brands often need to consider vloggers' background, image and values [11]. Based on social comparison theory, when bloggers have good comments on a luxury brand, consumers will also have positive comments. Therefore, bloggers often influence users' behavioral decisions and values.

Contrary to most studies on beauty or food in the journal, there is much less information about the lifestyle vlog. In the few studies on lifestyle vlog illustrated that the fundamental reason why people

like to watch lifestyle vlog is curiosity. Unlike TV shows, video blogs do not need professional editing and camera shots, and only need the simplest sharing to make people feel empathy. People are eager to peek into other people's lives, find similarities and compare themselves [12]. Life pressure makes many young people feel anxious and lonely. The interaction brought by the Internet makes them eager to seek companionship through the Internet to meet social needs. Lifestyle vlog often has a companion function.

In conclusion, this paper will take lifestyle vlog as the research object type and critically analyze the influence of this type of vlog on users in order to fill the research gap in this field. This research will look at the vlog text content from the audience's point of view, and refer to the video viewing data results and preferences appropriately. At the same time, this study will explore the communication differences caused by Chinese and foreign cultural backgrounds. This research expects to find out the cultural and psychological differences between Chinese and Western people in vlog from comparison.

3. Communication effect of lifestyle vlog

By using the method of observation and case analysis, this paper will observe 20 vloggers each on YouTube and Bilibili, explaining the content, mode and effect in lifestyle vlogs from different perspectives. There will also be some specific cases to demonstrate the differences between China and foreign countries and literature review that investigated the relevant theories and topics.

3.1. Content analysis

Vlog content production is one of the most core links in the process of communication and Chinese and foreign creators pay different attention to content. Lifestyle vlogs can include campus experience, daily work, journey and so on. In videos describing self-discipline and healthy life, Han Anna describes the topics of wonderful life on Bilibili. The most watched video was the day she and her boyfriend were in the apartment during the isolation. There will be more modern, warm and calm video styles. Renee Amberg is also a self-discipline vlogger on YouTube. The content in her videos can be divided into three main topics. The first is "Let's Chat," just like "Questions & Answers". The second is about what she eats during one week, mainly healthy recipes. The last topic is the book lists that she regularly shares. A series of videos focus more on teaching people how to live a healthy and active lifestyle, sometimes with tips and knowledge. Different from taking video in the form of journal entries, Casey Neistat and Jingyue are representative vloggers on YouTube and Bilibili. Casey's early content was based on criticizing large organizations, corporations, and bad social phenomena. One of his videos, with nearly 30 million views, tells the story of how he was fined after a New York bike lane was occupied. The video editing and shooting is very professional, and the style is very personalized. As China's first generation of vlogger, Jingyue's video content runs through his philosophical views. He often thinks about the relationship with the world in vlog.

There is no strict style classification and fixed pattern while comparing the lifestyle vlogs in China and foreign countries. The expression style and content of the vlog has become a landscape. Video creators in different countries show content that is closely related to local culture, society and individual values. The main purpose of a good vlog is to communicate lifestyle and personal ideas to the audience. Besides, because of authenticity and personalization in lifestyle vlogs, it changes the relationship between "front" and "back" regions. Erving Goffmann believes the "front" region is "personal display of social events", which is an ideal landscape in line with social expectations. The "back" region is "the hidden parts of the real self". He highlighted that the front region is unreal in his theatrical metaphor. Whereas, Espen noted an inconsistency in his research, He thought it was

necessary to separate from the dimensions of regional division [13]. Vlog gradually opens the back area, while meeting people's privacy needs, avoiding the occurrence of related ethical problems.

3.2. Communication mode analysis

The video industry most include the content production mode into Professional Generated Content (PGC), User Generated Content (UGC) and Professional User Generated Content (PUGC).

The mode of operation is very similar to YouTube. Some people believe that Bilibili will be the YouTube of China. But actually Bilibili on the user production method and behind the essence is still different from YouTube. In China, the media is the mainstream public opinion position dominated by the Communist Party, so that the early content production model was dominated by PGC. With the development of user-generated content, platforms like Bilibili became a UGC comprehensive video community website [14]. Bilibili is essentially a minority community aimed at Animation Comic Game. Different from YouTube, user 'content creators can benefit from advertising and membership. The business model of Bilibili takes mobile games and live broadcast as the main income sources [15]. Moreover, barrage is one of the main functions of Bilibili. On the one hand, bullet subtitles make users feel more sense of presence and participation, and at the same time, subculture endows ethnic groups with unique expression. However, early video bloggers were driven by their own interests to produce content, which led to insufficient motivation for content. In 2016, the platform content is constantly being expanded to attract more users. Later, Bilibili uses PGC content as brand support and UGC content for traffic growth. Many stars, as well as key opinion leaders, have produced professional video content that has made considerable impact, such as Li Ziqi, Papi Jiang, and Zhouliuye Zoey. The increasingly diversified output of content leads to the integration of content production mechanisms, thus creating a new form: professional user generated content (PUGC). Vloggers on video platforms no longer work alone, but choose professional teams for marketing and management. Some bloggers, or influencers, belong to Multi Channel Network (MCN) agencies. China's MCN model is different from that of foreign countries. They employ bloggers and influences to make money. But foreign agencies are more likely to be their brokers, forming partnerships with vloggers.

As the world's largest video website, YouTube has the ability to attract original users continuously due to its own characteristics. YouTube has a perfect advertising system and after being bought by Google, the copyright issue has greatly improved [16]. Original users are starting to upload videos to YouTube because of the high advertising rates and various incentive schemes offered by the platform. In addition, broadband and media production costs in the United States, Europe and America are lower than those in China. This stable UGC ecosystem gives video creators the ability to create a steady stream of great video work. As a result, some video bloggers have quit their careers and become professional youtuber. Unlike Bilibili, YouTube offers a complete range of content, from funny videos to vlogs to product reviews. And now YouTube has updated the image quality, with 4k hd available in the Advanced options. Such advantages make many media companies want to replace UGC content with PGC content. Then, a good creative ecosystem eventually led to PUGC. However, this kind of format somewhat reduces the enthusiasm of people to actively create personalized content. It is more difficult for amateur creators to get attention and fans than ever before, and the platform is becoming more and more commercialized. Some of the video content you see from bloggers is actually run by a team. YouTube's position also threatens mainstream and traditional media, with viewers no longer restricted to specific times and content, but selectively viewing professional and amateur video content.

For a long time, China has been dominated by the professional generated content (PGC) of the mainstream media. Under the influence of science and technology and new media, China has started some online community platforms with UGC as its core content. It also promoted the convergence

development of PUGC in the past five years. However, foreign digital media generally range from user-generated content (UGC) to professional generated content (PGC), and then to professional user-generated content (PUGC). There is still a big difference between the specific operation modes of the two companies.

3.3. Communication effect analysis

New media technology not only broadens people's access to information, but also gives people the right to take the initiative to choose information. The monopoly position of traditional media has been completely impacted. Now everyone is the subject of news communication, and the environment of new media communication has changed to user-centered. Therefore, users' motivation and demand can reflect the influence of media on people's cognition, psychology and behavior [17].

Vlog has a certain production threshold, so the video clarity, editing professionalism and narrative logics are all good, and people can acquire knowledge from it. Users can selectively watch according to what they want to know and learn. When the blogger tells his own personal experience, users can also get life philosophy, life inspiration, useful knowledge and news. Through other people's lifestyle vlogs, users can learn about a whole new world that is completely different from their own. The audience gets a sense of gain and can get an education after watching it. In addition, the journal can relax and satisfy curiosity. As a video creator, vlog fulfills the pure need for self-expression. Whether you are sad or happy, you can get responses and comments from others, which can make you pass the time [18]. Vlog not only satisfies the photographer's self-identification but also realizes the user's peeping psychology. People distract themselves from the current painful situation by watching other people's lives, and it's easy to get caught up in it. Most of the videos named vlog are about urban life and the perfect journey, which shows the cultural tastes that people in modern society desire.

In addition to the above two impacts, the most obvious function of vlog is to provide entertainment. Compared to other forms of entertainment, vlog, with its convenience and uncomplicated characteristics, constitutes a brand-new pan-entertainment video era. On the one hand, some funny vlog videos combined with creative editing methods can relieve people's pressure in the fast-paced life. On the other hand, stars as video producers are more able to influence people's living habits and social choices. Stars influence users' consumption behaviors by adding advertisements in their videos, so that users fall into the false consumption trap. The content of video creation is also impetuous and superficial, which will bring crisis to the development of modern society. The development direction of video vlog should not only meet the needs of users oriented, but should create high-quality diversified content.

Whiting, Anita, and David Williams argued that a uses and gratifications theory discusses ten uses that social media can provide for people. These include education, pass time and entertainment. From the audience's point of view, this theory aims to analyze how social media can meet the needs of users, as well as the psychological and behavioral effects of social media on people [19]. People make choices based on their own needs, which is dynamic and denies the traditional view that the audience passively receives information. Therefore, once users are satisfied with their use requirements, they are also influenced by network communication and use the network more frequently.

4. Discussion

In this study, I explored the differences of lifestyle vlog in content, mode and communication effect between Chinese and foreign countries. First of all, the journal doesn't distinguish the content and style by country, but it presents regional characteristics of society and culture from an individual perspective. Second, User Generated Content (UGC) was born in China later than that on other countries. Some countries in Europe and America have developed from user-generated content (UGC)

to professional generated content (PGC). But China started with PGC, and then developed UGC and PUGC under the influence of foreign countries. Finally, vlog is different from videos with low aesthetic taste. It has a higher level of graphic beauty, which enables people to get education, pass time and enjoy life and entertainment. What needs to be emphasized is that vlog satisfies users' peeping desire, but also makes people fall into the landscape constructed by vlog.

Previous studies have shown that vlog is authentic and personalized. This study confirms such results, and further analyzes the contents of different vlog categories to determine the landscape characteristics of vlog. This study not only determines the content production mode of UGC, but also outlines the evolution process of UGC and analyzes the substantive reasons for the difference between Chinese Bilibili and foreign YouTube on content production mode. Therefore, this paper focuses more on the beneficial impact of lifestyle vlog on people, and provides methods and introduction for users and vloggers to rationally use social media.

However, some limitations of this study deserved mention. This study is only an overview analysis, and lacks research samples for vlog mode and effect analysis, which is subjective and one-sidedness. Subsequently, it can be considered to increase the sample size and establish a model for quantitative research to make the test results more objective. Then, the comparison between China and the foreign countries in this study has a wide range of applications and is not thorough and detailed enough. A detailed analysis should be carried out on a country-specific basis. In the future research, we can enrich the theoretical framework and provide powerful data to analyze the influence of social media on people's communication, from which we can obtain innovative and novel discoveries.

5. Conclusions

Vlog is presented in a visual language, with music, subtitles and pictures added to form a comprehensive expression of multiple media. At the same time, due to vloggers' personalized display and real life records, journals have become popular.

The development of vlog in China and other countries has always shown a tendency of mutual learning and integration. In addition, the content of the vlog reflects culture and class as well as values, both professional and non-professional production modes. Vlog affects users as well as satisfies their usage needs. Be alert to the pitfalls of consumerism and possible social and cultural problems, so as to create truly high-quality, authentic and trustworthy content and create deeper artistic value.

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