

Generation Z Subculture Marketing in the New Media Environment: A Case Study of Bilibili

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ABSTRACT

With the development of the times, Generation Z has gradually become the main force of market consumption. Taking Bilibili as an example, this paper studies the subculture marketing of Generation Z in the new media environment. The research shows that, influenced by the Internet environment, online social media, and the popularity and development of subculture among young groups, Generation Z has its own characteristics, and there are some new changes for them in the concept of aesthetic, creation, and consumption. In the meanwhile, Bilibili has achieved great development by grasping these new demands for targeted marketing with its corresponding strategies.

Keywords: Generation Z, Media marketing, Subcultural marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z refers to the people who were born between 1995-2010. In the new global economy, Generation Z has gradually become the main force of market consumption. In 2018, Schroeder published a paper in which he described Generation Z as a generation with the most purchasing power [1]. In the Internet environment, sub-cultures such as 2-D culture, fan-culture, and e-sports culture are developing in diversity, and subculture consumption is also favored by Generation Z. In recent years, the proportion of subcultural consumption of contemporary youth in China is also increasing. As their purchasing power increases, how to grasp the market demand and carry out the subculture marketing has become a top priority. Based on the rapid development of the subculture and new media communication, this paper focuses on the subculture marketing of Generation Z in the new media environment by analyzing the changes of Generation Z in aesthetics, creation and consumption, as well as the marketing strategy of Bilibili. The aim of this study is to provide theoretical analysis and suggestions for enterprises, helping them understand the needs of Generation Z, attract Generation Z consumers, and carry out relevant subculture marketing in the new media environment.

2. INSIGHTS INTO GENERATION Z BASED ON NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATION OF SUBCULTURE -- NEW CHANGES

The widely accepted year of birth for Generation Z is from 1995 till 2010. There are about 1.9 billion people born in this age group, and about 312 million of them are in China. As they are the first generation growing up with the Internet from birth, Generation Z can be considered as true digital natives. They are more inclined to mass communication, and in order to enjoy leisure, as well as using their time efficiently, they are more willing to focus on those that produce the greatest benefits and maximize their activity experience [4]. Chinese "Generation Z" have their own unique views on society, and they have a stronger sense of national honor and national pride. They love the second dimension and intend to show themselves in their favorite communities while being unique [5].

2.1 New aesthetic

With the development of the Internet technology, the aesthetic of Generation Z is no longer confined to the inherent traditional thinking, but towards a more inclusive and integrated diversified development. The emerging Internet subculture provides new content for the development of contemporary aesthetic culture, and makes the development of aesthetic culture diversify and dynamic, thus breaking the pattern of single aesthetic

culture leading cultural production [6]. With the development of the technology and network society, the boundaries of time and space have been diluted [7]. This increases the activity of subcultural groups, and makes it possible for users to quickly change their identities among different circles, giving them greater identity mobility. The Internet can make people who are thousands of miles apart in reality gather together to form "interest communities" because they have the same minority interests, and the definition between the minority and mass culture becomes blurred.

2.2 New creation

In the era of the new media, online community has gradually become the source of trend culture among young people. In 2021, "YeQingHui", "GongJuRen", "DuoSunA" and "clown is me" became popular online buzzwords, which were commonly used in young people's online expressions and daily life. Network space and virtual identity provide independent and free space for young people to create network buzzwords. The openness and rapid development of the network media and the real-time dissemination of information on the network platform provide rich materials for the generation of the network buzzwords. Bilibili, the leading video platform that is popular among China's younger generation, announced the bullet chat of 2021 on its site to be "Po Fang Le". It originates from a situation when gamers are attacked. "Po Fang Le" resembles English phrases such as "this really got me" or "I'm shook". These network buzzwords reflect the current mood of users and create an emotional resonance with users, which has become a cultural phenomenon in today's society.

2.3 New consumption

Generation Z accepts consumption symbols and values consumption experience. Symbol consumption means that in the process of consumption, consumers not only consume the products themselves, but also consume the "meaning" or "connotation" represented by these symbols. Under the leading role of consumption symbols, for Generation Z, shopping is not only to complete the basic form of consumption and meet the basic survival needs, but also to consume and exchange symbols, thus completing the process of value seeking and identity confirmation [8]. Generation Z grows up with the birth of the Internet and experiences its rapid development, they are actively seeking consumption upgrading, promoting personality consumer groups, and always trying to dig the best value and service. Luo Lou pointed out that social network is the most important medium of expression for the "Generation Z" group, who are used to presenting themselves in a more direct and braver way in social media and consumption. The personalized "Generation Z" group requires enterprises to "maintain sincerity, understanding and respect, and provide services in place"

[9]. John and Yaser pointed out that the self-symbolization of the "Generation Z" group is dynamic and uncertain. They prefer to travel on the Internet, and enterprises can expand the market by opening relevant platforms in virtual society [10].

3. USERS AND ACHIEVEMENTS ANALYSIS OF BILIBILI

3.1 User analysis of Bilibili

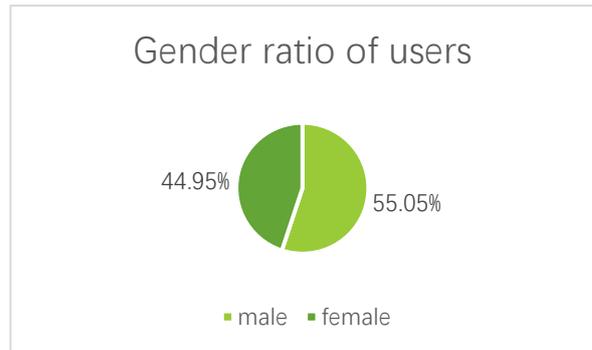


Figure 1 Gender ratio of Bilibili users.

According to iResearch index, male users of Bilibili account for 55.05% of the total effective data, and female users account for 44.95%. The ratio of male and female users is close to 1:1.

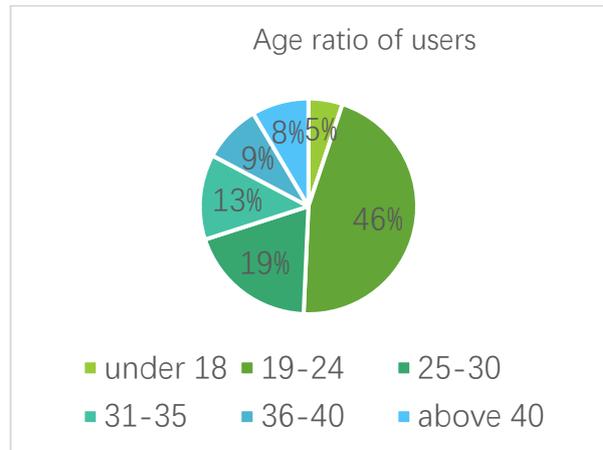


Figure 2 Age ratio of users.

In terms of age, the majority of users of Bilibili are those between 19 and 30 years old, accounting for 64.95% of the total. Users from this age group are either college students with a good economic level or employees of enterprises and public institutions [11]. In particular, users born after 1995 occupy an absolute dominant position, accounting for 45.63% of the total. Users from this age group are concentrated in high schools and colleges.

3.2 Communication achievements of Bilibili

Bilibili has seen a surge in users in recent years as its core users have aged. The core users of bilibili are mainly

Generation Z. As they get older, more and more teenagers have the ability and desire to own their own media social circles. The scale of Bilibili's young users continues to expand, with 65% of Bilibili's young users aged 19-30. Generation Z, with Bilibili as its main gathering place, is making its voice stronger and louder, and ACG (Animation, Comics, Games) culture is becoming more visible. Bilibili has developed from the original single 2-D world circle to a comprehensive network community with more than 7000 vertical interest circles, 8 million tags, and 19 zones, becoming the largest pan-quadratic network platform and community in China. According to the Q4 2021 and annual financial report released by Bilibili, the total revenue of Bilibili reached 19.38 billion YUAN in 2021, with a year-on-year growth of 62%. Chen Rui, Chairman and CEO of Bilibili, said: "Bilibili has achieved considerable growth over the past three years, with the size of its users more than doubling and the size of its revenues nearly tripling. Bilibili's monthly active users grew 35% year over year to 272 million in the fourth quarter of 2021, and the community continues to be highly active and engaged, with an average of 82 minutes of daily use."

4. MARKETING STRATEGIES OF BILIBILI

4.1 Aesthetically appropriate quality content

4.1.1 Integration of the main culture and subculture

With the rapid growth of bilibili users and richer community content, Bilibili has also expanded more trendy culture related content favored by young people on the basis of maintaining the two-dimensional characteristics. For example, "The Most Beautiful Night", the New Year's Eve party in 2020, was praised by many media as "the party that most understands young people". It stands out from the major TV channels because it clearly understands the current cultural trend. And Bilibili "Bai Nian Ji", an online Spring Festival gala for young people that exists only online, is also loved and pursued by young people. In the early days, worship was mainly about the content of ghost and livestock area and living area. With the participation of more uploaders, the content of the New Year worship festival has also become abundant, with crosstalk, sketches, ancient songs, and other traditional cultural content presented in a more fashionable form.

4.1.2 Various types of partitions

Bilibili has created a variety of content divisions, and established links with audiences from other circles of interests, learning, and business. The establishment and expansion of the first-level content zones, such as the film and television area, food area, and knowledge area, can

be seen as Bilibili's ambition to bring the members from other circles into its territory. Currently, Bilibili has a total of 19 first-level subdivisions. The number of uploaders of the game area has decreased from 27% in 2018 to 15% in 2021, while the number of other areas gradually increases with more diversified community types. From the perspective of the post-subculture, the "style" of today's youth subculture is not only the resistance color of the "same", but also more diverse and complex. Bilibili is acting as the exhibition hall for the construction of diverse "style" of ACG subculture [12].

4.1.3 Source supply of high-quality IP

Bilibili constantly optimizes the website content and attaches importance to the source IP development. Since 2015, Bilibili has invested a lot in the domestic animation industry. Bilibili invests more and more frequently in the animation industry, including the major well-known animation production and production companies. It also invests in developing promising young teams. Outstanding national innovations such as *The Blessing of The Heavenly Officer*, *The Demons of The Heavenly Treasure* And the *Spirit Cage*, emerge one after another. *The Sky of Wind Dog Boy*, co-produced by Bilibili, became the highest-rated domestic youth-themed TV series on Douban in 2020. The rap music program "Rap New Generation" is aired exclusively on Bilibili and has a rating of 9.2 on Douban.

4.2 Resonant works creation

4.2.1 Achieving re-creation by following buzzwords

Bilibili keeps up with the hot output of ghost livestock content. For example, "Duang" became the most popular meme on the Internet in 2015. At first, bilibili uploader "crimson toy" turned one of Jackie chan's shampoo ads into a spoof video by means of interesting clips. The repeated sound effects of "Duang" in the video and the brainwashing and comic melody have been hotly discussed by netizens.

4.2.2 Actively creating hot spots

In 2020, Bilibili's "Breaking Circle" trilogy "After Waves", "Entering the Sea", and "Happy Reunion" have been released on Wechat, Weibo and Douyin. Among them, Guangming Daily and Bilibili jointly released the May 4th Youth Day propaganda film "After Waves" in the prime time before the CCTV News broadcast. The film has become bilibili's "break the circle" of the tipping point, The word "After Waves" was listed as one of the top ten buzzwords in 2020.

4.2.3 User creation incentives

Some of Bilibili's Uploaders harvest traffic from their users by uploading videos to share, and Bilibili has launched a "creative incentives" scheme to give Uploaders more ways to monetise. Video viewers can also support their favorite video Uploaders by "investing" and "charging" them, among other things. In addition, Uploaders of popular areas such as the game area, living area, and beauty and fashion area can be promoted by themselves and earn income through cooperation with the brand.

4.3 Experience upgrade

4.3.1 Online community interaction

Social interaction and interest circles can upgrade fan groups from simple technical connection to cultural emotional resonance and value recognition [13]. Bullet screen interaction is the main way of community communication of Bilibili. While perceiving these bullets, young audiences gain joy and resonate with each other. When they are immersed in it, they brush the same comments to echo it. When the bullet screen they send is recognized, it meets the needs of self-expression. Bilibili also implements a hard access mechanism to create community thresholds, build "tribalized" communities, and consolidate and value identity. Only by answering the questions and becoming a full member can users gradually unlock all the functions of Bilibili. An individual becomes a full member for seeking identity, which means the group's identification with the individual, namely the group identification. This group identity greatly increases user engagement and retention. Moreover, it effectively maintains the internal order of the community and contribute to the harmonious atmosphere inside the circle.

4.3.2 Online and Offline

Bilibili is good at using the marketing mode of both online and offline efforts. It not only sets up special online discussion areas, but also holds offline user gatherings frequently. The official Weibo account of Bilibili, the Wechat official account of Bilibili, and the official website of Bilibili are important ways to communicate with users online. Offline communication is mainly carried out through Bilibili offline activities such as concerts and C3AFA comic exhibition, which can not only condense users in the community, but also build a brand and bring some income.

5. SUGGESTIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT

In the Internet era with increasingly advanced technology, copyright issues are messy and online

content is difficult to regulate. Bilibili should strengthen the supervision of the content review and protect the rights of users and creators. At the same time, the review of Bullet Chats and comments should be strengthened to create a clean and civilized community environment for users to improve the user experience. In view of the copyright infringement and inferior content, Bilibili should optimize the work of the regulatory department on the basis of the existing management, establish a sound mechanism for safeguarding rights, and resolutely prevent the dissemination of content that is on the edge of law or infringement.

Age distribution of Mobile Internet users in China in October 2020

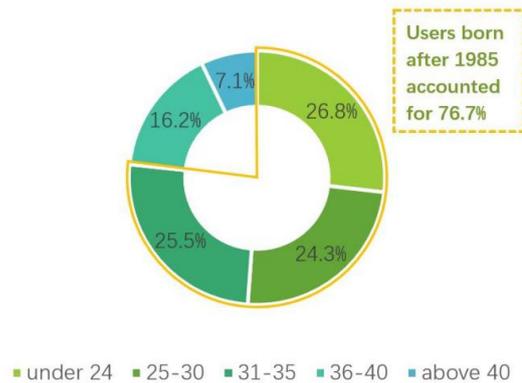


Figure 3 Age distribution of Mobile Internet Users in China in 2020.

Daily interest distribution of Mobile Internet users born after 1985 in China in 2020

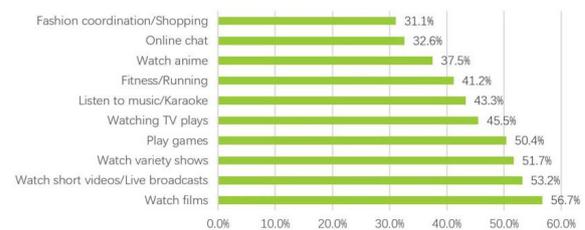


Figure 4 Daily interest distribution of Mobile Internet Users in China in 2020.

Content creation interest distribution of Mobile Internet users born after 1985 in China in 2020

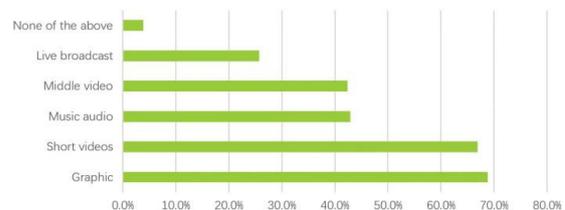


Figure 5 Content creation interest distribution of Mobile Internet Users in China in 2020.

Secondly, according to the UserTracker data, in 2020, mobile Internet users born after 1985 in China accounted for 76.7%, which is the mainstream group of the Internet. Although rich life and being familiar with the Internet

make these groups have different interests, they also have good entertainment content consumption habits and participation. Bilibili should give full play to the value of the content based on users' interests and combining multiple sectors, and combine online and offline in order to create an ecological consumption system not limited to the video content and improve the user value.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the rapid development of subculture and new media communication, this paper focuses on the subculture marketing of Generation Z in the new media environment by analyzing the changes of Generation Z in aesthetics, creation, consumption and other aspects. The author also analyzes Bilibili's marketing strategy of developing from a single two-dimensional circle into a large comprehensive community. In view of the new aesthetic of Generation Z, Bilibili chooses the high-quality content with the right aesthetic taste. Aiming at the demand of Generation Z for the Internet trend culture, Bilibili keeps up with the hot topics and keeps creating. Bilibili chooses to upgrade the user experience and optimize the social environment in view of the continuous expansion of the experience symbols of Generation Z. Enterprises should deeply analyze the needs of Generation Z and improve their products and services in time for long-term development.

This article only roughly analyzes the new changes of Generation Z from three aspects without indepth analysis of its specific characteristics. Subsequent research can focus on the analysis of the specific characteristics of Generation Z and corresponding countermeasures for online platforms in the Internet era.

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