Behind the Lens: Exploring the 'Frontline of China's Diplomacy' Video Production Practice

Ge Guanghe1*, Shazleen Mohamed2, Muhammad Nurhafiz Hassim3, Wang Xianxu4

1Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: 905904552@qq.com
2Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: shazleen@uitm.edu.my
3Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: hafiszhassim@uitm.edu.my
4Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: 806299628@qq.com

ABSTRACT

The 'Frontline of China's Diplomacy' Vlog, produced by China Central Radio and Television (CCTV), has added a fresh viewpoint to news reporting in the mainstream media by providing first-person accounts of key events like visits by Chinese leaders. Although vlogs have been widely used in various fields, most of the existing literature on vlogs focuses on the characteristics, advantages, and challenges of this new form. Scant studies explore the advantages and disadvantages of vlogs on news reporting and audience perception. To this end, the effect of VLOG on news is investigated using in-depth interview. Findings conclude that vlogs in news reporting have some benefits, such as enhancing and expanding the mainstream media news exposure, making related news more accessible and interesting, and improving the user experience through interactive communication. The study does, however, note some difficulties, including the possibility for news information to become muddled as a result of strong personal influence, the usage of rotating anchors which may not align with traditional vlog creation, and the recognition that 'Vlog+News Report' cannot replace the strengths of in-depth reporting by mainstream media. As a result, this study suggests that the vlog format may not be suitable for regular use in in-depth news reporting in mainland China.

Contribution/Originality: This study documents the effects of vlogs on news reporting and audience perception in mainland China, using the case of the ‘Frontline of China’s Diplomacy’ Vlog produced by CCTV. It explores the benefits and challenges of using vlogs as a new form of news dissemination and interaction, and provides suggestions for future research and practice.
1. Introduction

Vlog, short for video blog, is a form of online media that combines video and text to create a personal and interactive presentation of information. Vlog has become a popular and influential medium in the era of social media, especially among young people who use it to share their opinions, experiences, and lifestyles. However, Vlog is not only limited to personal expression and entertainment; it can also be used for professional and educational purposes, such as news reporting (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020).

News reporting is one of the most important functions of mass media, as it informs the public about the events and issues that affect their lives and society. News reporting has traditionally been dominated by mainstream media outlets, such as newspapers, radio, television, and websites, which follow certain standards and conventions of journalism. However, with the development of digital technology and the emergence of new media platforms, news reporting has also undergone significant changes and challenges (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). One of these changes is the adoption of Vlog as a new form of news reporting (Burgess & Green, 2018).

Vlog for news reporting is a phenomenon that involves using Vlog to produce and disseminate news content, usually by non-professional or citizen journalists who have access to digital cameras and online platforms. Vlog for news reporting can provide some advantages over the traditional news formats, such as novelty, diversity, intimacy, and interactivity.

Produced by China Central Radio and Television (CCTV), the "Frontline of China's Diplomacy" Vlog, which reports major news from a first-person perspective, has introduced a new dimension to mainstream media news reporting. This paper aims to explore the effect of Vlog on news reporting in mainland China, using the case study of the “Frontline of China's Diplomacy” Vlog. Since November 9, 2019, the CCTV News New Media Centre has launched a series of Vlogs entitled “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy,” which have been released on various platforms, including CCTV News WeChat, Weibo, Bilibili, and others. The Vlogs provide viewers with a first-person perspective on Chinese leaders’ diplomatic activities. The first episode, featuring Kang Hui, the chief host of CCTV, focuses on his diplomatic journeys to Greece and Brazil. Each of Kang Hui’s Vlogs lasts about 2-3 minutes and covers various aspects of his experiences during these diplomatic activities. These Vlogs have gained popularity, especially among young viewers, and have received significant engagement on social media platforms. The second episode, filmed by Gang Qiang in Myanmar, continues the Vlog series and offers a different perspective on diplomatic activities. Although it garnered less attention than the first season, it still contributed to the Vlog’s overall viewership and engagement.

Although, Vlog enjoys many benefits in news producing, gathering and disseminating. However, Vlog for news reporting can also face some challenges and limitations, such as subjectivity, inconsistency, simplicity, and controversy (Zhou & Liang, 2020). Thus, this paper aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of Vlog on news reporting in mainland China, using the case study of the “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy” Vlog. The names of the first season vlogs are: “Kang Hui’s First Vlog: He’s Going on a Trip”, “Kang Hui’s Second Vlog: What’s the First Thing He Does After Getting Off the Plane in Athens”, “The Third Vlog is Coming! , “The Third Vlog is Coming! Kang Hui’s Vlog has also been snatched”, “Kang Hui’s vlog has been updated again and again and again! He spits out that he’s a selfie rookie”, “No delay in updating! Kang Hui reveals the secret weapon in
the Vlog for you guys! Kang! What does Kang Hui’s workplace in Brazil look like? The first season of Kang Hui’s Vlog ends! Mystery Guest”.

The content of Kang Hui’s vlogs mainly focuses on Kang Hui’s observations and interviews at the news scene, diplomatic ceremony of Chinese leaders, behind-the-scenes stories and highlights of news reports. Kang Hui’s vlogs are loved by young viewers and frequently hit the Weibo hot search. As of 10 November 2023, the topic #Kang Hui’s Vlog reached 240 million readers, 129,000 discussions, and the most played Vlog reached 15.68 million views. Kang Hui’s first Vlog reached 581,000 likes on the Jieyin platform, and each of Kang Hui’s Vlog tweets on CCTV News’ WeChat public number exceeded 100,000+ readers (Fung, 2020).

The second season of “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy” was filmed by Gang Qiang, and the destination was Myanmar. Gangqiang’s Vlogs totalled 2, both of which were over 4 minutes long. In terms of packaging, the unified “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy” logo was added to make it more recognizable; in terms of content, the titles of the two episodes were: “Gangqiang’s Vlog is online! Let’s go to the house of “cyborgs” to visit relatives” and “Learning Burmese and looking at old photos”. Compared with Kang Hui’s “Vlog”, Gangqiang’s Vlog is more relevant to the news scene. Compared to Kang Hui’s “pop-ups”, Gangqiang’s vlogs have received relatively little attention. As of 10 November 2023, on Weibo, the first Vlog with the highest broadcast volume had only 5.64 million views, and the readership of the topic #Gangqiang’s Vlog# was significantly lower than that of #Kanghui’s Vlog#, with a readership of 69,617,000, and a discussion volume of 7,436. The playback volume of Gangqiang’s first Vlog on the CCTV News b-station’s official number was only 227,000 broadcasts. In addition, since the beginning of this season, CCTV News has also registered an account on the microblogging platform under the IP of “the forefront of great country diplomacy”, and as of 10 November 2023, a total of 312,537 people have followed the account (Fung, 2020).

Although vlogs have been widely used in various fields, such as entertainment, education, and lifestyle, there is still a lack of systematic and empirical research on the application of vlogs in news reporting, especially in the context of Chinese mainstream media (Wang & Picone, 2023). Most of the existing literature on vlogs focuses on the characteristics, advantages, and challenges of this new form of communication, but does not explore the advantages and disadvantages and impact of vlogs on news reporting and audience perception. Furthermore, there are some difficulties in applying vlogs to news reporting in reality, such as the low willingness and ability of journalists to use vlogs as a way of storytelling, the lack of professional guidance and technical support for vlog production, and the potential risks of violating the news ethics and standards by using vlogs (Silaban, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the case of “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy” Vlog, which is a pioneering attempt by CCTV to use vlogs as a way of reporting news events related to China’s foreign affairs. This study examines the content, style, and interaction of this vlog, as well as the feedback and opinions of the audience, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of vlog in Chinese media news reporting and provide suggestions for future improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Vlog and News Reporting

Vlog, short for video blog, is an online media format that combines video and text to present information in a personalized and interactive manner. News reporting is one of
the most critical functions of mass media, informing the public about events and issues that impact their lives and society. The literature review will focus on the definition, characteristics, and impact of Vlogs and news reporting, as well as existing research and gaps in the use of Vlogs for news reporting, particularly in mainland China (Luo et al., 2019).

Vlog, or video blog, was first introduced in the Cambridge Dictionary and refers to “a record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you film and publish on the internet” (Liu, 2021). Dai (2020) further defines Vlog as a form of blogging through visual elements like editing, scoring, and subtitles. Vlogs are typically short in duration, ranging from 5 to 15 minutes. Vlogs have gained popularity, especially among young people, who use them to share their opinions, experiences, and lifestyles (Dai, 2020).

According to iiMedia Research, the number of vlog users in China reached 249 million in 2019, and the market size of the vlog industry will maintain a steady growth trend in the future (iMedia Research, 2019). Vlogs are used for various purposes and genres, such as education, entertainment, travel, beauty, gaming, and more.

Vlogging in China began in 2018, with a group of vloggers uploading their filmed video works to social media or video-sharing websites to record their lives and share them with friends. With the use of celebrities such as Nana Ouyang and video bloggers, it became well-known to Chinese netizens. Therefore, 2018 is also known as the “first year of Vlog”. In 2019, Vlog is gradually exploding in China, and has also become a field that Internet giants are competing to invest in Weibo, Bilibili, Tencent and others have begun to test the waters in the field of Vlog. On 25 April, Tiktok launched the “Vlog one billion traffic support plan”. Baidu’s “good-looking video” also put Vlog as the focus of development in 2019.

Trenaman and McQuail (2023) emphasizes that news reporting is one of the most vital functions of mass media, providing the public with information and commentary on matters of public interest. Traditionally, mainstream media outlets like newspapers, radio, television, and websites have dominated news reporting, adhering to specific standards and conventions of journalism. They define journalism as “the activity or profession of regularly providing the public with information and comment on topics of public interest and importance” (Trenaman & McQuail, 2023). According to Walsh (2020), news reporting has been undergoing significant changes and challenges with the development of digital technology and the emergence of new media platforms. One of these changes is the rise of citizen journalism, which is “the act of citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information” (Walsh, 2020).

According to Guo (2018), news reporting is news storytelling. In China, news stories told by news reports can be broadly classified into two kinds: one is the factual reporting that tracks and records news, especially breaking news, after it emerges, which is also known as hard news; and the other is the story re-enactment, significance excavation and conceptual generalisation of non-breaking events according to a specific framework and point of view - usually. This type of news story can be soft news, curated news and feature stories (Guo, 2018).
2.2. Using Vlog for News Reporting

The literature on video blogging for news coverage is relatively few and recent, as it is an emerging phenomenon and only few scholars have explored it. A Pew Internet and American Life Project study revealed that most bloggers use the medium as a kind of online journal, not considering them to be a form of journalism (Lenhart & Fox, 2009). However, some existing studies have explored the characteristics, practices, and effects of vlogging for news reporting in different contexts and cases. The following is a brief review of some of these studies.

One of the earliest studies on vlogging for news reporting was conducted by Wall (2018), who examined the use of vlogs by Iraqi bloggers during the Iraq War in 2003-2004. Melissa Wall is a professor in the Department of Journalism at California State University, Northridge, USA. She is the author of Citizen Journalism: Valuable, Useless or Dangerous? and founder of the Pop-Up Newsroom. Wall (2018) argued that vlogs offered an alternative and authentic source of information and commentary on the war that challenged the mainstream media narratives. Wall (2018) also suggested that vlogs enabled a more personal and emotional connection between the bloggers and their audiences, as well as a more participatory and dialogic form of communication (Wall, M., 2018).

According to Lestari (2019), Vlog has become a popular and influential medium in the era of social media, especially among young people who use it to share their opinions, experiences, and lifestyles. However, Vlog is not only limited to personal expression and entertainment; it can also be used for professional and educational purposes, such as news reporting (Lestari, 2019).

Another study on vlogging for news reporting was conducted by Meng and Wang (2023), who examined Chinese journalists’ use of video blogs (vlog) for news reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meng and Wang (2023) found that the j-vlog, as a hybrid form of professional-amateur reporting, affords an alternative space for journalists to perform journalistic transparency through self-disclosure of their life and work routines, increasing intimacy and engagement with audiences (Meng & Wang, 2023).

A case study on vlogging for news reporting was conducted by Yudian (2023) and some scholars, who investigated the use of vlogs made by Kanghui. Yudian (2023) argued that "Kanghui VLOG" is an active and successful exploration of traditional news dissemination within the environment of media convergence. It dispelled the original serious image, enriched the content of the report, narrowed the distance with the audience, and promoted the leading of public opinion, expanded the influence of mainstream media. Yudian (2023) also argued that vlogs were used by activists to mobilize and empower their supporters and followers, as well as to create a sense of community and solidarity (Yudian, 2023).

3. Methodology

This study employed the qualitative research method. Research was found appropriate as the objective of the study was to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program (Cresswell, 2016). The method of data collection in this study is in-depth interview. It is worth mentioning that interview is a method to collect data from a predefined group of people by asking them questions.
Specifically, the researcher selected all 9 episodes (as shown in Table 1) of the Vlog as the sample for research. The Vlog was broadcast from December 2019 to January 2020 on multiple online platforms, including CCTV, Weibo, WeChat, TikTok and others. The number of sample studies is 9 episodes, with an average length of about 5 minutes per episode. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to select people who had watched the Vlog as the interview sample. The interviews were conducted with a total of 12 participants, all of whom had watched the series’ vlogs, the participants consisted of six journalists (professional viewers) who specialised in TV news production in mainland China or were former hosts of Chinese TV stations, and six viewers who watched or commented on Vlogs online with no background in journalism. The researcher designed a set of semi-structured interview questions for participants based on their roles and perspectives. These questions were open-ended and flexible to allow for follow-up probing and clarification, such as “What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of the vlog format for news reporting?” “After watching these vlogs, what do you think about China's official media and Chinese diplomacy?” “How do you think the personal style and attitude of the host or reporter in the vlog affect the delivery of news information?” “How did this vlog series help or inspire you to understand the situation and background of China’s diplomacy?”, etc.

Table 1. The Selected Episodes in This Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Release Time</th>
<th>Episode</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kang Hui's first vlog is online!</td>
<td>250&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>What's the first thing you do when you arrive in Athens?</td>
<td>220&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kang Hui's vlog was stolen from him.</td>
<td>207&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kang Hui laughs at himself for being a rookie in selfies</td>
<td>237&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Come catch up on updates! The secret tool in Kang Hui's vlog</td>
<td>155&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kang Hui's vlog is updated! The secret tool for dubbing</td>
<td>258&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019.11.15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Season 1 finale of Kang Hui's vlog!</td>
<td>200&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020.1.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gang Qiang's vlog has been updated! Let's go to &quot;baobo's&quot; house</td>
<td>455&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020.1.19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learn Burmese and see old photos</td>
<td>608&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher contacted each interviewee by email or telephone and arranged a convenient time and place for the interview. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, depending on the respondent's availability and preference. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were audio-recorded with the consent of the respondent.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher and checked for accuracy and completeness. The researcher then used qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) to code and categorise the interview data according to the themes and concepts that emerged from the data.

The "China's Diplomatic Frontline" series of Vlogs is selected as the research sample of current affairs news Vlogs, which has great representativeness and research value. Firstly, from the data of the sample broadcasting volume, this example has a record high broadcasting volume among the previous Vlog videos of the same type, and it has been
on the hot search several times on social media platforms and triggered a phenomenal spreading boom. Secondly, as a series of news reports, it has a narrative coherence and an analysable basis compared with a single current affairs news Vlog, both in terms of the video actors and the Vlog content. In addition, CCTV News created the same name IP microblog account "China's Diplomatic Frontline" for the series of Vlogs, and added the same name Logo element in the packaging form, it is not difficult to see that this is another rebranding of China’s mainstream media.

4. Findings

The findings are organised into two themes: (1) the advantages of Vlog for news reporting; and (2) the challenges and limitations of Vlog for news reporting.

4.1. Advantages of Vlog for News Reporting

The study found that Vlog, as a new form of news reporting, has certain advantages over the traditional news formats, the advantages are as follows.

4.1.1. Enriching and Expanding the Mainstream Medias Propaganda Reports

While doing the interview process, the researcher discovered that Vlog can provide more details, perspectives, and behind-the-scenes stories that are not usually covered by the conventional news reports. Two of the interviewees Qin and Ling, a Chinese-American audience from the United States and Singapore, claimed that they like this Vlog because it is very lively and humorous. They share the same opinion said that the reporters are very cute and funny, they make me laugh and smile, they also make me feel closer to them and to China’s leaders. Ling claimed that the "Frontline of China’s Diplomacy" Vlog showed the preparations, interactions, and emotions of the Chinese leaders and diplomats during their visits to foreign countries, which enhanced the image and influence of China in the international arena.

The researchers were surprised to find that many non-Chinese audience (eg., Smith from UK) felt that the vlogs had somewhat changed their perceptions of Chinese leaders and Chinese news programmes. When asked what they thought of China’s official media, they usually responded that it was more approachable and creativity.

Ling (Singapore): I really like the "China's Diplomatic Frontier" vlog because it allows me to see a different side of Chinese diplomacy. In traditional news reports, I can only see the formal meetings and signing of agreements between Chinese leaders and foreign dignitaries, but in the Vlog, I can see their cordial exchanges on a number of occasions. Such vlogs not only show the humanity and diversity of China’s diplomacy, but also enhance my understanding and goodwill towards China and other countries.

Smith (UK): I was surprised by the "China’s Diplomatic Frontier" vlog because it was completely different from my previous impression of Chinese media. I used to think that the Chinese media is monotonous and official, but in the vlog, I saw the energy and creativity of the Chinese journalists, who not only introduced the background and details of some of China’s diplomatic activities in a light-hearted and interesting way, but also shared their views and comments on China’s diplomatic activities.
from their own perspectives and feelings. Vlogs like this give me a new understanding and respect for the Chinese media.

4.1.2. Making Related News Reports more Approachable and Warmer

Vlog can create a more intimate and personal connection between the reporters and the audience, by using a first-person point of view, a casual and conversational tone, and a lively and humorous style. Based on the findings from the interviews in this study, many interviewees claimed that they believed the "Frontline of China's Diplomacy" Vlog used various techniques, such as self-introduction, direct address, jokes, anecdotes, and emoticons, to engage and entertain the audience, and to convey a positive and friendly attitude. One of the informants, Liu, claimed that the addition of lively elements in the late stage of the screen enhances the viewability and interestingness of Frontline of Great Power Diplomacy, which also shows the deep integration of vlogs and news reports from another angle. Qiu, who is a journalist from CCTV, believed that the use of "emoticons", "special fonts" and other visually appealing elements to interpret or render emotions not only enriches the content of the news, but also enhances its impact. This not only enriches the content of the news, but also increases the interest of the news. He claimed that the use of subtitles, the addition of Internet buzzwords such as "chasing after the shift", "selfie rookie" and "fancy snatching" can not only highlight the role of interpreting the text, but also stimulate the interest of the audience. Can not only highlight the role of interpreting the text, but also stimulate the interest of the audience and actively participate in it, thus arousing emotional resonance and achieving a very good interactive.

4.1.3. Improving the User Experience of Interactive Communication

Vlog can facilitate a more interactive and participatory communication between the reporters and the audience, by using various platforms, channels, and features. The "Frontline of China's Diplomacy" Vlog was broadcasted on multiple online platforms, such as CCTV website, Weibo, WeChat, TikTok, and TikTok, which increased its accessibility and reach. The Vlog also encouraged the audience to leave comments, feedback, questions, and suggestions, which increased its interactivity and responsiveness. The study interviewed some of the audience who watched the "Frontline of China's Diplomacy" Vlog and found that they generally had positive evaluations and reactions to it. Some of their opinions are as follows.

Ge: “I think this Vlog is very informative and interesting. It shows me a different side of China’s diplomacy that I didn't know before. It makes me feel proud of my country and its achievements.”

Wang: “I appreciate this Vlog because it is very interactive and participatory. I can watch it on different platforms and devices. I can also comment on it and ask questions. I feel like I am part of the conversation.”

These interviews indicated that Vlog for news reporting has a positive impact on the audience’s cognition, emotion, and behaviour. It can increase their knowledge, interest, and satisfaction with the news topics; it can enhance their affection, identification, and loyalty with the news sources; and it can stimulate their engagement, involvement, and feedback with the news products.
Schramm, a famous scholar of communication science, said that "the best form of communication is interpersonal communication" (OSullivan & Carr, 2018). The researcher recognised that vlog, as a short new video form with the producer himself as the protagonist, with strong recordability and personality, its form requiring the producer to appear on the screen coincides with the requirements of interpersonal communication. During the interview, Qiu claimed that the essence of Vlog lies in the fact that it has the nature of dialogue, is interactive, and has affinity with people as a unique individual to communicate and exchange ideas. The essence of Vlog is that it is interactive and relatable, and it treats a person as a unique individual to communicate and exchange ideas.

Qiu: “For example, Gangqiang's first Vlog tells his daily life like many life documentary Vlogs today, 'I rushed to the station to gather early in the morning, and set off to the airport with my colleagues ...... This is our camera reporters, they set off early in the morning, and they usually film me, and today I also film them. Usually it’s them filming me, but today I'm filming them too ......,' says Gang Qiang, showing his preparations before he goes away from home from a first-person point of view.”

4.2. Challenges and Limitations of Vlog for News Reporting

The study also identified some challenges and limitations of using Vlog for news reporting in mainland China.

4.2.1. Loss of News Focus

Vlog is a highly subjective and expressive form of media production, which reflects the personal views, values, preferences, and styles of the reporters (Meng & Wang, 2023). According to the results, this may cause some problems for news reporting, such as bias, distortion, inconsistency, or controversy. The study found that in in-depth interviews such opinions were often mentioned by the informants, such as: "Yesterday, someone asked me if I chased after the stars, and I said I chased after the CCTV, after Kang Hui", "Handsome! A serious cute! Serious and humorous! Must watch every day!" and "Brother Kang is awesome! And he always uses 'you' to talk to us, so gentle! I didn't expect that the work of the Frontline News was so hard, you have to take good care of yourself!" It can be seen that the audience’s attention is obviously focused on Kang Hui himself, rather than the news or facts, more is holding a curiosity to see a news celebrity.

4.2.2. Violation of Vlog Creation Rules

Vlog is a relatively new and emerging form of media production, which has its own rules and conventions that differ from the traditional news formats (Havryliuk, 2023). However, during the interview, the researcher discovered that some of these rules and conventions may not be well understood or followed by the reporters or the producers of the Vlog. Yu, a journalist who is a very successful practitioner in China, claimed that the “Frontline of China's Diplomacy” Vlog used a rotating anchor system, which means that different reporters took turns to host the Vlog in different episodes and this process is not conducive to increasing user stickiness. During the interview, Liu, a news producer, claimed that this may violate the rule of vlog creation that requires and recognisable host or personality to establish a rapport and a brand with the audience.
Yu: “I think the rotating anchor system of the ‘Frontline of China’s Diplomacy’ Vlog is a disadvantage for the user engagement and loyalty of the Vlog. Because the Vlog is a personal and interactive form of media, the audience expects to see a familiar and trustworthy face that they can relate to and follow. If the host changes every episode, it will be hard for the audience to form a connection and a habit of watching the Vlog. It will also reduce the uniqueness and the identity of the Vlog, as it will look like a regular news program with different reporters.”

Liu: “I think the main challenges of producing a Vlog that covers China’s diplomatic activities are the complexity and the sensitivity of the topics, the timeliness and the accuracy of the information, and the competition and the censorship of the media environment. I think the need for a consistent and recognizable host can be balanced with the diversity and professionalism of the reporters by having a main host who introduces and concludes each episode, and invites different reporters to share their insights and experiences from the field. This way, the Vlog can have a stable and appealing personality, as well as a variety and a depth of perspectives.”

4.2.3. Inability to Replace in-depth Reporting

Vlog is a limited and simplified form of media production, which has its own strengths and weaknesses (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). It was argued that vlog can provide some advantages for news reporting, such as novelty, diversity, and intimacy, but it cannot replace the advantages of mainstream media in-depth reporting, such as professionalism, comprehensiveness, and depth (McQuail, 2023). One of the participants, Smith, claimed that the “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy” Vlog only focused on some aspects or highlights of China’s diplomacy, but it did not provide a comprehensive or critical analysis of the background, context, or implications of China’s diplomatic policies or actions.

Smith: “In the content of the vlog video ‘Frontline of China’s Diplomacy’, the backstage of media work occupies most of the content, reaching 55% of the content share, and the focus of the backstage of news also highlights the discussion of topics in the private sphere, sinking serious political issues into the daily micro-area, trying to make the audience most familiar with the content.”

While doing the interview process, the researcher discovered many informants believed that serious political issues are sunk into the daily micro-area by this vlog, trying to narrate from the most familiar and curious scenes of the audience. In terms of communication effectiveness, as a product of near-immersive journalism, vlogging is not necessarily more effective than traditional ways of reporting current affairs news (Lestari, 2019). According to an empirical study, audiences’ grasp of news information is lower when exposed to immersive news reports than when reading text. Although immersive reporting will help audiences achieve a holistic understanding of news content, they are more prone to omissions and deficits in the perception of details (Zhou, Lerong & Li, 2018).
These findings suggest that Vlog for news reporting is not a perfect or universal solution. It requires careful consideration and adaptation to suit the specific needs and expectations of the news topics, sources, and audiences. It also requires a balance and integration with other forms of news reporting to achieve a more effective and comprehensive communication. The findings can be visualised more intuitively in the diagram below (as shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1: Summary of Advantages and Disadvantages of Vlog News Reporting

- **Advantages of Vlog for news reporting**
  - Enriching and expanding the mainstream media’s propaganda reports
  - Making related news reports more approachable and warmer
  - Improving the user experience of interactive communication

- **Challenges and limitations of Vlog for news reporting**
  - Loss of news focus
  - Violation of vlog creation rules
  - Inability to replace in-depth reporting

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the impact of vlog on news reporting in China by using the case of the vlog “Frontline of China’s Diplomacy”, which was produced by CCTV and featured first-person accounts of Chinese leaders’ visits. The study has conducted in-depth interviews to audiences and media practitioners, and has drawn the following conclusions: vlog news reporting can enhance and diversify the mainstream media’s propaganda reports, make related news more accessible and interesting, and improve the user experience through interactive communication. However, vlog news reporting also faces some challenges and limitations, such as blurring of personal colours, violating the rules of vlog creation, and not being able to replace in-depth reporting, and so on. These findings have implications for future research and practice in the field of news media and vlog production.

The theoretical implication of this study is that it contributes to the existing literature on news media and vlog production by providing a comprehensive analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of vlog on news reporting in China. This study reveals that vlog can enhance the appeal and accessibility of news information, expand the exposure and influence of mainstream media, and improve the user experience and satisfaction through interactive communication. However, this study also identifies some challenges and limitations of vlog news reporting, such as the potential loss of objectivity and credibility due to strong personal influence, the inconsistency between rotating anchors and traditional vlog creation rules, and the inability of vlog to replace the depth and quality of in-depth news reporting by mainstream media. These findings not only enrich the current scholarship in this field, but also provide new insights and implications for journalistic practice, especially in the context of China’s diplomacy. The
practical implication of this study is that it provides suggestions for news media practitioners and vlog creators, who can use the findings of this study to improve their news production and dissemination strategies. A call for action that can be made based on this study is that news media practitioners and vlog creators should collaborate more closely and effectively to produce high-quality and engaging vlog news reports that can meet the needs and expectations of the audience. They should also be aware of the challenges and limitations of vlog news reporting and try to overcome them by following the rules of vlog creation, maintaining the objectivity and credibility of news information, and providing in-depth analysis and commentary on important events and issues. Furthermore, they should seek feedback from the audience and incorporate it into their future work.

This study does not represent all audiences who have watched the vlog "Frontline of China's Diplomacy". However, it provides a snapshot of mainland Chinese television audiences and news producers regarding the effects of vlogging applied to news reporting. Furthermore, it is not the intention of this report to accuse or condemn any organisations involved in vlogging. However, it will be eye-opening to see what shifts, mechanisms, policies, or adjustments these newsmakers and vlog creators can work together to contribute to the diversity of news formats and the expression of opinions of the general public in mainland China. More needs to be done to improve news coverage in mainland China, especially those that contribute to enriching and stereotyping the image of China's leaders. Therefore, this study has some limitations and requires further analysis and research.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (RECUITM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.
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