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YouTube automobile branding: Success metrics in YouTube

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Abstract

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YOUTUBE AUTOMOBILE BRANDING:
SUCCESS METRICS IN YOUTUBE

By

Dakoda Johnson

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Table of Contents

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Keywords: YouTube, Aristotelian Appeals, Persuasion Theory, Automobile Branding

1.   Introduction

YouTube has easily reached the position of largest and most popular online video sharing site. With over 1 billion unique visitors visiting the website each month, watching a combined total of 6 billion hours of video content in the same time period, It is not difficult to see the success that YouTube has attained in a relatively short time period (YouTube, 2015). Founded in 2005, YouTube has since had the goal to fulfill its slogan "Broadcast Yourself". Originally created as a site that allowed it users to upload and watch content that was user generated, YouTube has now developed into a service to host a variety of digital media content. From live video streams of Presidential Addresses to the latest music video for a popular dance craze, YouTube has matured into an information rich source of new media (Rickle, 2014).

This source of new media has opened the door for private and public companies to employ the system to relay information about the company to its potential customers. Potential for internet based brand marketing corresponds well with this form of digital media delivery, due to the enormous user base with a conglomeration of interest. Interest that extend to almost every perceivable topic. One such example is the automobile industry. There is great potential for companies such as those in the the automobile industry to make use of the nearly endless audiences that flock to YouTube on a daily basis.

For example, BMW's corporate YouTube channel uploaded an internet based commercial showcasing a fleet of its BMW 2 Series Coupé in what the company is calling a "driftmob". The two minute and one second video features a group of hollywood stunt drivers, each with a BMW M235i, completing "drift-choreography" (synchronized car tire burnouts resembling a dance). This video has received over 13,579,000 views in just 180 days working out to an outstanding 75,500 average views per day. With such amazing consumer reach, this video brings about the question, what makes this video so popular? Consider this video in contrast to a video uploaded by car manufacturer Nissan. Their video titled "2015 NISSAN Pathfinder HEV - SiriusXM® NavTraffic® (if so equipped)" collected only 10 views in 133 days.

Video characteristics, hereafter referred to as metrics, obviously play a dominant role in determining the success of a video. The video sharing community made up of channel "Subscribers" also have a large impact of the various metrics related to each video the channel posts. Existing research has examined the functionality and application of these metrics on singular videos to quantify success (Mohr, 2014; Chen, 2013; Morreale, 2013; Kwak, Rodriguez, Ahn, & Moon, 2007; English, Sweetser, Ancu, 2011). The issues with the pre-existing studies is that they do not approach branding within YouTube from a company or marketer level.

Marketer branding and persuasion has been studied in more traditional forms of new media, such as Social Media sites like facebook (Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013; Yahn, 2011; Berlanga, García, & Victoria, 2013.) Research completed in this scope provides

interesting insights on how marketers may approach textual based branding for user involvement. These studies however lack inquiry of media rich information provided by services such as YouTube.

There is a gap in research when it comes to marketeer branding in YouTube. While YouTube is the most popular video sharing website in the world, not much is known about how the system can integrate into not only business application, but academic applications as well. Overall, there is not much research investigating how firms can utilize YouTube for branding. This could be due to the nascent nature of YouTube as it grows and matures. Social media as a whole is still an emerging form of new media that has only began to be explored. Our research questions hopes to broaden what is known about the use of YouTube for corporate marketeer branding.

1. Which persuasive appeal characteristics of YouTube video relate to successful performance?
2. What specific video metrics can lead to higher ratings and view counts?
3. What roles do subscriber communities play in the successful performance of a video?

The objective of our study is to aid in filling some of the void in research, specifically marketeer generated branding content on YouTube. This previously unexplored area of study will help gain new insights into a platform that is not well known. Our study will analyze the 50 most recent video's of 25 different automobile brands by recording

various metrics about the content and metadata for each video. These recorded metrics will include information such as video length, view count, subscriber's, date uploaded, and aristotelian persuasion appeals. Our study examines the relationship between video characteristics, specifically Aristotelian persuasion rhetoric, with rating and view success to provide insights and contribute knowledge for marketeers in designing successful content that appeals to their respective market.

2.   Literature Review

2.1 YouTube Metrics

YouTube has amassed a large user base by combining rich content videos and social networks on a scale not previously achieved by user generated video-on-demand systems. This is likely due to the obviously particular statistical metrics that the site has implemented for its users, metrics such as video length, access patterns, video lifespan, ratings, and comments (Cheng, 2007). A handful of studies have investigated the use of video metrics to quantify success within YouTube. For example, Cha, Kwak, Rodriguez, Ahn & Moon noted that while video age may seem like a positive indicator for success, empirical results show that users preference is overall indifferent to the video's age. In fact, their data showed that over 80% of videos requested in a day are older than 1 month, accounting for around 72% of the entire requests. Iris Mohr (2014) found that video sharing communities also prove to be fundamentally important to a video's success, especially when high profile users (celebrities, users with large following, well connected people) utilize their popularity to seed a video. In their work, Cheng, Dale, & Liu

suggested that YouTube video views are the most important metric to quantifying success within the system.

2.2 Social Media Branding & Persuasion

Aristotelian Rhetoric, or as it is now commonly called "persuasive communication", is essential for business marketing. Persuasive communication can be broken down into three main appeals, Ethos, Pathos, and Logos(Dulin, 2011). He defines each persuasion rhetoric appeal as follows. Ethos relates to the credibility that the audience attributes to the speaker, while Pathos plays to the emotions that the audience will derive from the subject. Logos however, pertains to the logic and reason that our analytical brains process subjectively. While these three main appeals are not new concepts, they can have new impacts on digital marketing in Web 2.0 technologies such as YouTube.

The importance and popularity of Web 2.0 technologies such as social media is clearly evident in todays world. The growth in popularity created a vast amount of online user generated content (Electronic Word of Mouth) and therefore, appealed to marketers. Oftentimes brand marketers, on behalf of their company, produce the content that represents the collective marketing department and brand message that consumers engage in (Goh, 2013). Digital Guru Jack Yan (2011), recognized the significance of branding within social media and completed a study on how these new forms of media can influence branding. His study conceptualized nine goals that firms are aiming to fulfill when pursuing social media branding. These goals included, but are not limited to:

building membership with the organization, communication of brand values, and encouraging consumers to promote the brand. The outcomes of the nine goals include: building brand association, developing brand quality, and improving brand awareness. Similarly, Goh, Heng, & Lin examined social media branding by comparing user generated content and marketer generated content. Their study found evidence supporting the hypothesis that brand community content has an impact on consumer purchase behavior by utilizing embedded information and persuasion contexts.

Persuasion techniques also have considerable consequences in the realm of social media, as outlined in a study by I.Berlanga, F.García-García & J.S.Victoria (2013). Their article approached the existence of classic persuasion rhetoric (Ethos-Ethical, Pathos-Emotional, Logos-Logical) in communications in online social networks. They postulated several hypotheses: that social networks are the new rhetorical space for the 21st century, dialogue of network users is plentiful in rhetorical figures, and that said rhetorical figures facilitate efficient communication between users. Their findings supported each hypothesis, even showing pathos being a leading factor in communications on facebook; while logos had relatively no appearance in conversations.

2.3 Persuasion In YouTube

Classic Aristotelian persuasion theory (also known as rhetoric) presents that communication falls into Pathos (emotional appeal), Logos (logical appeal) , and Ethos (ethical appeal). These persuasion appeals when applied to branding on YouTube suggest

that there is powerful potential for marketers to further brand identification on this system. While there is not extensive research on the topic of utilizing persuasion appeals for branding within the confines of YouTube, A study completed by English, Sweetser, and Ancu (2008) looks at rhetoric for political videos on youtube. Their study concluded that Ethos is the most credible appeal to viewers, followed by Logos and Pathos. This result speculates that persuasion theory has substantial application as a success metric on YouTube.

After completing literature review we find that there is a lack of research studying the effects of firm generated ads and their persuasive appeal in building a brand in the social media setting. We find this research gap merits further study, and intend to fulfill this inquiry in the study.

3.   Research Model & Hypothesis Development

Prior literature examined the relationship of short video sharing and characterized the success metrics that are quantified for each specific video (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011; Cha, Kwak, Rodriguez, Ahn, & Moon, 2007; Morreale, 2013). The study of YouTube by English et al. (2011) has the most direct application to our specific study. Capitalizing on the emerging digital media field, English et al. (2011) used a three-cell posttest only experimental research technique to evaluate the effectiveness of persuasive appeals within YouTube. In their study, participants were shown three different videos about health care, each with a different persuasive appeal (Ethos-Credibility,

Pathos-Emotional, Logos-Logical). Findings from their study showed that Ethos ranked as the most credible appeal, followed by Logos and Pathos. These results postulate that users are not easily swayed by facts or emotions.

Our study aims to build upon English et al. (2011), by incorporating similar persuasion concepts and how they relate to video ratings. Our study incorporates a different experimental design, and looks to employ their findings within the corporate environment. If we apply the findings from their study we can hypothesize that videos with each persuasion appeal will relate positively to video ratings.

HYPOTHESIS 1 (H1): Ceteris paribus, videos with Ethos persuasion appeal will positively relate to ratings.

HYPOTHESIS 2 (H2): Ceteris paribus, videos with Pathos persuasion appeal will positively relate to ratings.

HYPOTHESIS 3 (H3): Ceteris paribus, videos with Logos persuasion appeal will positively relate to ratings.

HYPOTHESIS 4 (H4): Ceteris paribus, videos with a combination of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos appeal will positively relate to ratings.

4.   Data and Variables

Data from our study was extracted from a variety of different sources. Metrics pertaining directly to YouTube, such as video title, views, date uploaded, subscribers, category, etc.

were obtained from a popular YouTube analytics site, VidStatsX (http://vidstatsx.com/).

This site is searchable for every YouTube channel and provides hourly analytics updates

once the channel is being tracked. We used this site to gather information for the 50 most

recent videos from 25 different automobile brands. Brands that were incorporated in this

study included:

- Acura
- Audi
- BMW
- Buick
- Cadillac
- Chevrolet
- Chrysler
- Dodge
- Fiat
- Ford
- General Motors
- Hyundai
- Jeep
- Kia
- Lexus
- Lincoln
- Mazda
- Mini (cooper)
- Nissan
- Scion
- Subaru
- Tesla
- Toyota
- Volkswagen
- Volvo

The Digital IQ Index also provided information that we used to help develop our study.

According to their site, "The Digital IQ Index®: Auto examines the digital competence

of 42 automotive brands targeting the U.S. market" (Digital IQ Index 2014), this

information can be accessed at (http://www.l2inc.com/research/auto-2014). A related

study by UTA Brand Studio examined the Automotive Brand Dependence Index,

allowing us to inject the data from this study as a variable. Information about the

Automotive Brand Dependence index can be acquired at the UTA Brand Studio.

(http://utabrandstudio.com/2014-automotive-brand-dependence-index/).

Data referring to information about the date extracted, rhetorical persuasion analysis (Marketing Type, Ethos, Logos, Pathos, Uncategorized), and the days between upload and extraction were self calculated to complete the data requirements. Data calculated for Rhetorical Persuasion Analysis was based off the classic Aristotelian rhetorical model used by English, Sweetser, and Ancu (2008).

The variables for our data model are as follows:

Dependant Variables (DV):
    Views (logged), Rating

Independent Variables (IV):
    Company - subscribers
    Video - length, days upload
    Persuasive appeals - ethos, logos and pathos
    % of comments

Control Variables (CV):
    Brand index: Digital IQ & Rank

4.1   Descriptive Statistics

Listed Below are a few descriptive statistics that provide an overview of the aggregate data collection.

Highest Viewed Video: *The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i*	Views: 13,579,699
Highest Average Views (Company)	Mini Cooper: 665,535 views
Lowest Average Views (Company)	Nissan: 321 views
Highest Average Rating (Company)	Tesla Motors: 4.9432
Lowest Average Rating (Company)	Nissan: 0

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Subscribers	1250	6716	410883	70639.52	93135.141
Ethos	1246	0	1	.23	.421
Logos	1241	0	1	.52	.500
Pathos	1246	0	1	.43	.495
Duration-secs	1250	4	3598	153.53	294.910
Views	1250	0	13579699	127143.95	728293.949
Rating	1250	.00	5.00	4.3655	1.17654
% Comments	1250	.00	6.25	.1686	.36373
Digital IQ Index	1250	98	139	116.20	10.595
Digital IQ Rank	1250	2	32	16.24	8.381
Valid N (listwise)	1232				

Correlation Matrix

	Subscr~s	Ethos	Logos	Pathos	DayUpl~d	Durati~s	Views	Rating	Comments	Digita~x	Digita~k	DaysBe~n
Subscribers	1											
Ethos	-0.0209	1										
Logos	-0.0846*	-0.2421*	1									
Pathos	0.1853*	-0.0861*	-0.6202*	1								
DayUploaded	0.0387	-0.032	-0.0114	0.0557*	1							
Durationsecs	-0.0362	0.2083*	-0.033	-0.1198*	-0.1434*	1						
Views	0.0616*	0.0147	-0.0916*	0.0943*	-0.0123	-0.0275	1					
Rating	0.1043*	0.0961*	-0.1384*	0.1511*	-0.1225*	0.0125	0.0278	1				
Comments	-0.0560*	-0.0027	-0.0245	-0.0595*	0.0467	0.0353	-0.0674*	0.0631*	1			
DigitalIQI~x	0.5280*	-0.0857*	-0.0602*	0.1776*	0.2953*	-0.0849*	-0.0335	0.0099	0.0092	1		
DigitalIQR~k	-0.5184*	0.0855*	0.0578*	-0.1847*	-0.2755*	0.0908*	0.025	-0.0509	0.0065	-0.9856*	1	
DaysBetwee~n	-0.0387	0.032	0.0114	-0.0557*	-1	0.1434*	0.0123	0.1225*	-0.0467	-0.2953*	0.2755*	1

5.   Methodology & Results

We examine three robust OLS regression models regressing view (logged), comments (logged) and rating for each uploaded YT video on persuasive appeals with control variables of number of days video was uploaded, number of subscribers of each firm YT profile and length of each video. The three models are shown below.

$$ln\_views = \beta_0 + \beta_1*ethos + \beta_2*logos + \beta_3*pathos + \beta_4*days\text{-}upload + \beta_5*subscribers + \beta_6*duration + e$$

(1)

$$ln\_comments = \beta_0 + \beta_1*ethos + \beta_2*logos + \beta_3*pathos + \beta_4*days\text{-}upload + \beta_5*subscribers + \beta_6*duration + e$$

(2)

$$\text{rating} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{ethos} + \beta_2 * \text{logos} + \beta_3 * \text{pathos} + \beta_4 * \text{days-upload} + \beta_5 * \text{subscribers} + \beta_6 * \text{duration} + e$$

(3)

β_0 is the intercept and e is the error term. The primary objective is to measure β_1, β_2 and β_3, which are robust coefficient values for the various persuasive appeals constructs. The result for estimating these models are shown in Figure 2.1

Figure 2.1. OLS Robust Regression of views, comments and rating on persuasive appeals

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Dependent Variable	*ln_views*	*ln_comments*	*rating*
Ethos	0.5592 (0.1622) ****	-0.0031 (0.0146)	0.279 (0.0598) ****
Logos	0.1078 (0.1618)	-0.0182 (0.0199)	-0.0645 (0.0595)
Pathos	1.2523 (0.1564) ****	-0.0256 (0.019)	0.3288 (0.0626) ****
DaysBetween	0.0017 (0.0005) ****	-0 (0) *	0.0006 (0.0002) ***
Subscribers	0 (0) ****	-0 (0) **	0 (0) ****
Duration (secs)	-0.0004 (0.0004)	0 (0)	-0 (0.0001)
_cons	7.1386 (0.2085) ****	0.1625 (0.0246) ****	3.9893 (0.0912) ****
N	1233	1233	1233
Robust R-squared	0.143	0.009	0.059
F	0.0	0.08	0.059
Mean VIF	3.32	3.32	3.32

* <.1, ** <.05, *** <.01, **** <.001, B - robust coefficient, Standard error in parenthesis.

6.   Discussion

We can conclude from the results of the present study that videos with certain persuasive appeals, specifically Ethos and Pathos rhetoric, have positive relations to various YouTube metrics that suggest overall branding success. Our findings supported both H1 and H2 Hypotheses, in that videos with Ethos and Pathos appeals showed positive relation to video ratings. Our findings did not support H3 and H4 hypotheses, because videos with Logos appeal did not show positive relation to ratings. The robust R-squared values of the aggregate model of video views (.14) and ratings (.059), show slight indication of positive relationships between persuasive appeals and video success metrics. However, the robust R-squared values for comments (.009) does not have connotation of a positive relationship between number of video comments and persuasive appeal. While the robust R-squared values may seem limited for each model, the exploratory nature of this study lends itself to further examination of the topics included within our framework. Evidence suggest that Ethos and Pathos persuasive appeals have the strongest relationship with views and comments due to the nature of the rhetoric. Credible appeals and Emotional appeals seem to resonate well with the YouTube audience for branding purposes.

We observed that both Ethos and Pathos persuasive appeals work in collaboration to achieve a positive indicator of the overall video's success. Companies looking to manage YouTube channels with high views and ratings should consider the content that is

uploaded. Research suggest that it is important to incorporate multiple persuasion rhetoric techniques into videos uploaded for the best chance of returning a positive result. Our findings postulate that automobile marketers should focus their YouTube content efforts on Ethos and Pathos appeals for the most return on advertising spent (ROAS).

As digital media grows into an ever more crucial part of marketing in today's business world, Web 2.0 media platforms such as YouTube will be further integrated as marketing channels to prospective customers. The still nascent nature of these platforms present themselves as great opportunities for further research and application in the academic and corporate environments. Our study serves as a springboard to other researchers looking to further the conversation in the digital marketing forefront. Larger data sets and involvement of various other social media platforms are two areas that could enhance the work that our study has encompassed.

7. Conclusion

This research study investigates how persuasive appeals influences video performance metrics through YouTube. Specifically we examine a few different aspects of classic Aristotelian rhetoric namely, Ethos-Credibility, Pathos-Emotional and Logos-Logical, in video content. We found that Ethos and Pathos persuasion techniques have positive significance to views and ratings of their corresponding YouTube video. We conclude that certain persuasion techniques play an admissible role in performance metrics for the

context of YouTube branding. Also, there is credible evidence that suggest importance of video persuasion content in uploaded branding videos.

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APPENDIX

Figure 3.1 Video page for *"The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i"* BMW Channel

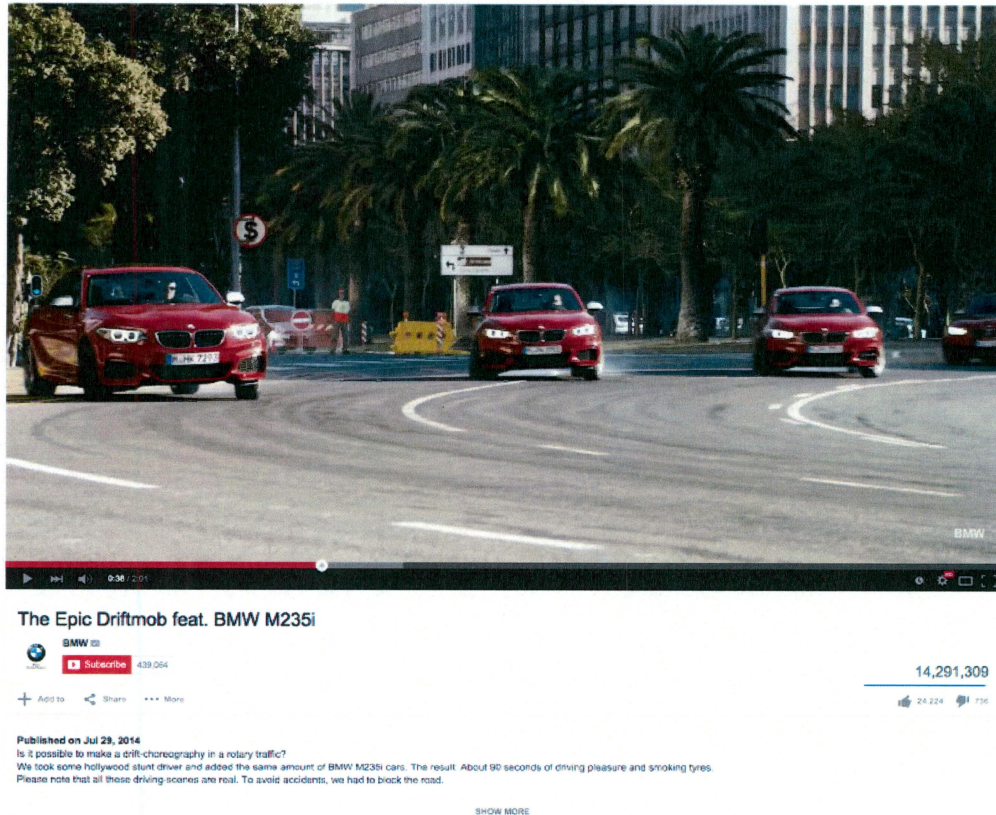**The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i**

Note: Shows Views, Description, Duration, Video Title, Likes, Dislikes, Channel
Information and Subscribers, Comments(Not Shown)

Figure 4.1 VidStatsX Channel Information for *Ford Today*
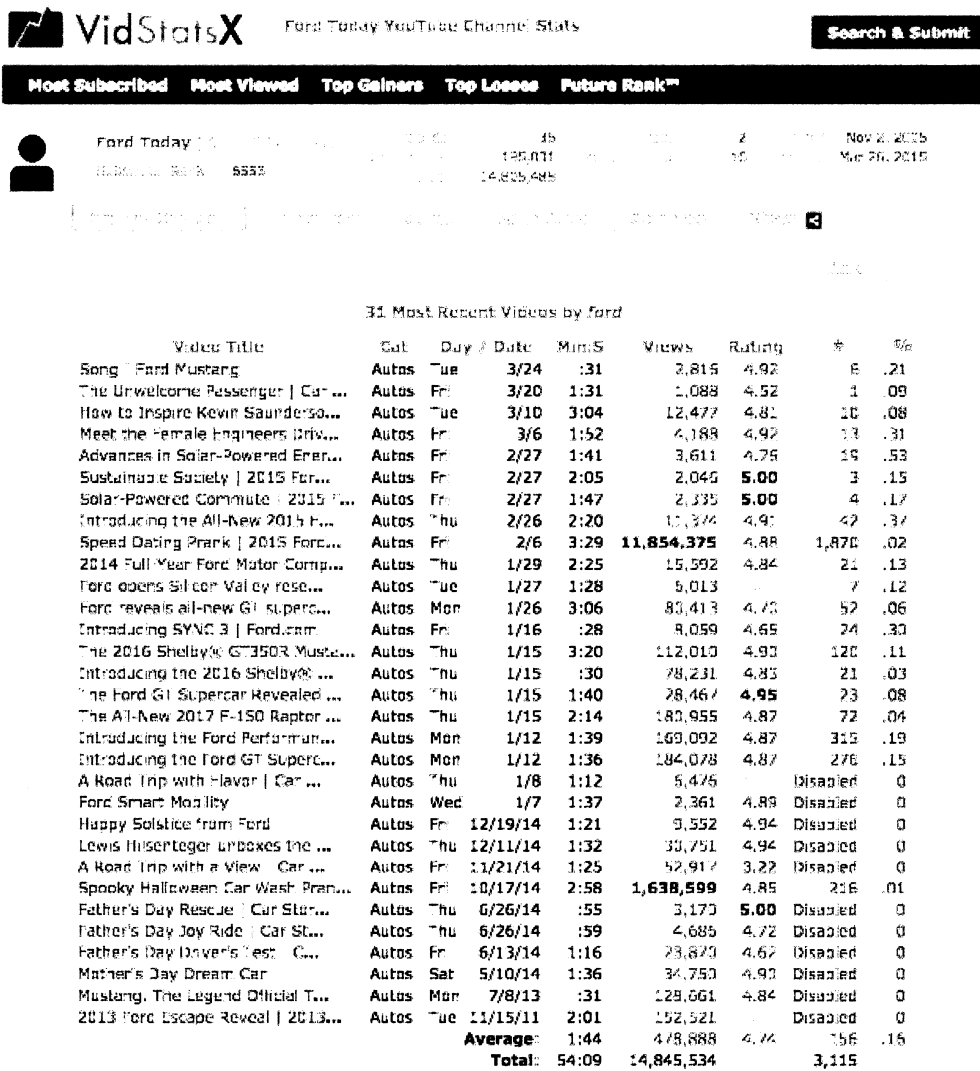
Note: Shows Channel Info, Subscribers, Total Channel Views, Video Title, Category, Upload Date, Duration, Views, Rating, Number of Comments, Percentage of Comments

APPENDIX

Figure 3.1 Video page for *"The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i"* BMW Channel

The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i

BMW

Subscribe 439.064

14,291,309

Add to   Share   More

24.224   716

Published on Jul 29, 2014
Is it possible to make a drift-choreography in a rotary traffic?
We took some hollywood stunt driver and added the same amount of BMW M235i cars. The result: About 90 seconds of driving pleasure and smoking tyres.
Please note that all these driving scenes are real. To avoid accidents, we had to block the road.

SHOW MORE

Note: Shows Views, Description, Duration, Video Title, Likes, Dislikes, Channel
Information and Subscribers, Comments(Not Shown)