

A study on the image construction strategies of moderators in the context of international communication

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and intense international communication situation, it is urgent to comprehensively enhance the effectiveness of international communication and build a strong team of moderators to meet the needs of international communication in the new era. As spokespersons for the country, presenters play an important role in shaping the country's image, enhancing discourse and telling China's story. Based on this, this paper takes the image of the host as the object of study, focusing on the transformation of the image construction of the host in the new era in terms of content, form and interaction, and proposes to construct the image of the host from the three aspects of the audible language, body language, and instrument make-up, and cultivate the team of hosts of international communication.*

Keywords: *International communication; Host image; Spoken language; Paralanguage*

1. Introduction

International communication capacity building is an important means of spreading Chinese culture, shaping China's image and grasping the right of international discourse. As China's economy takes off and its comprehensive national power continues to grow, there is an urgent need to establish a foreign communication system that matches the country's strength. However, under the international communication pattern of "the West is strong and the East is weak", the international public opinion environment has become increasingly complex, and the problem of cultural discounts brought about by cross-cultural communication and the problem of cultural aphasia brought about by unidirectional communication require us to continuously strengthen the construction of international communication capacity, establish a professional team of moderators adapted to the needs of international communication in the new era, and form an international discourse that is in line with China's comprehensive national power and international status.

2. The importance of moderator image construction in the context of international communication

From the perspective of external communication, presenters for global audiences play an important and unique role in external communication and outreach. They are not only the spokespersons of the national image, but also the direct users of the right to speak, shouldering the sacred mission of shaping the country's image, enhancing the right to speak, and "telling China's story and spreading China's voice".

2.1. Shaping the national image

The words and behaviour of a presenter in external communication are the first and most direct messages received by audiences around the globe and greatly influence their first impression of the presenter. The image of the presenter not only affects his or her own impression in the eyes of the audience, but also affects the image of the whole country that he or she represents behind him or her. Therefore, compared with the hosts for the domestic local audience, the identity of the hosts of external communication is more special, they play the role of spokesman of the national image to a certain extent, and become the symbols of the national image. Hosts of internationally renowned TV stations such as ABC, NBC and BBC have a strong international presence.

2.2. Elevating the discourse

For a long time, it has become the "political correctness" of some foreign media to vilify, discredit and dis-inform China.^[1] How to make China's voice heard and China's attitude clear in the international arena of public opinion, and how to reverse the communication pattern of "the West is strong and we are weak", need to work hard to change the moderator as the country's "megaphone". As a "direct user of discourse", the moderator of external communication has a certain degree of "discourse framework setting power", and his or her own cultural literacy and operational capacity affects the building of China's international communication capacity. For example, the foreign news anchors cultivated by CGTN over the years are equipped with a number of columns aimed at spreading discourse frameworks and issues favourable to China, such as "China 24 Hours" and "My China Story", which have fully grasped the power of discourse and are able to effectively play the role of moderators in guiding public opinion in the arena of international public opinion.

2.3. Telling China's Story

Telling China's stories, spreading China's voice, and presenting a true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China are important tasks in strengthening China's international communication capacity building. As a communicator, the presenter is not only a carrier for telling a good Chinese story, but also the main body for spreading a good Chinese voice, shouldering the mission of the times to spread Chinese culture, Chinese spirit and Chinese values. Only by building a team of presenters who are proficient in foreign languages and have an international outlook and cross-cultural communication skills can we tell China's stories and spread China's voice. The host of "Global Chinese" programme takes the majority of overseas Chinese and foreigners interested in Chinese culture as its main audience, focusing on reporting major news in China and around the world, and acting as a narrator of China's institutional development, a communicator of cross-cultural exchanges, and a spreader of positive energy at the same time.

In conclusion, in the face of the increasingly complex public opinion situation, it is necessary to pay attention to the important role played by international communication moderators in foreign communication, focus on the proposition of international communication, construct the image of moderators adapted to the needs of the times, and reshape the pattern of international communication.

3. Characteristics of presenter's image construction in the context of international communication

In recent years, China has continuously strengthened its international communication capacity, innovated the forms of international communication, transformed the contents of international communication and enhanced the interaction of international communication, so as to continuously enhance its international communication capacity. The construction of the image of international communication hosts in the new era has achieved a historic transformation from "graphic" to "audio-visual" in form, from "fixed" to "individual" in content, and from "monologue" to "dialogue" in interaction.

3.1. Format: from "graphic" to "audiovisual"

With the rapid development and popularity of new media technology, people's information reception habits and aesthetic preferences have changed from the original "graphic aesthetics" to "audio-visual aesthetics", monotonous and stereotypical form of traditional news broadcasting is no longer adapted to the new media era of visual, personalised and diversified information needs. Mainstream media have begun to pay more attention to paralinguistic communication while optimising the audible language communication patterns of presenters. Paralinguistic expressions often include expression language, action language, gesture language, clothing language and environmental language, etc., which often have the effect of replacing verbal expressions, enriching emotional expressions, and combing self-image, etc.^[2] The presenter's sitting posture, eyes, expression, as well as hair style, make-up and body shape, all become an important part of the visual presentation, which can directly stimulate the audience's visual nerve. At present, the hosts of the International Channel not only have excellent business skills, but also show a dignified, amiable and cultured image, which has changed the traditional host's presentation style of focusing on language but not on images.

3.2. Content: from "fixed" to "personalised"

For many years, China's foreign communication hosts have been facing the international audience with the image of dignified atmosphere, calm and introverted, and amiable, which has indeed shaped a positive image of the mysterious ancient oriental country for our country, but it is also easy to strengthen stereotypes and leave an unfavourable impression of backwardness and pedantry and unawareness of adaptability on the foreign audience. Therefore, China's media actively seek changes, take the initiative to find a suitable direction for the construction of the image of the host in the context of international communication, and gradually move closer to rejuvenation, personalisation and internationalisation, so as to realise the transformation from "fixed" to "personality". For example, in 2021, CCTV launched the "Central Young" series of programmes, showing the multi-level and three-dimensional image of the hosts in the form of a reality show, which comprehensively refreshed the audience's perception of the host's fixed image. At the same time, the programme features not only variety regulars such as Kang Hui and Benin Salin, but also news channel hosts Li Zimeng and Gang Qiang, as well as CGTN host Wang Guan and CCTV's "traffic code" Wang Bingbing. It can be seen that the mainstream media are also breaking down the barriers of the audience's perception of the image of the presenter, and launching the pursuit of the "personalised" construction of the presenter's image.

3.3. Interaction: from "monologue" to "dialogue"

In the past, China has mainly adopted a one-dimensional "we-centred" promotional strategy of exporting its own culture and concepts without taking into account the barriers of cross-cultural communication, thus making it difficult for it to be accepted and recognised by the international community. As the process of globalization continues to accelerate, China's mainstream media have abandoned the concept of "cultural export" and emphasized "cultural dialogue", focusing on two-way interaction in communication. The external communication facilitator has changed from a one-way "sounding board" to a two-way "communicator", from "monologue" to "dialogue". In 2019, Liu Xin, host of China International Television (CITV), and Trish Regan, host of the Fox Business Channel (FBC), have won international recognition for their cross-oceanic dialogue, which is more of a dialogue than a confrontation. It can be said that it is through communication and exchange with foreign media that Liu Xin has effectively changed the ignorance, prejudice and denigration of some Americans towards China, and greatly improved our international image.

In short, China's mainstream media adjust the image construction strategy of the host in a timely manner according to the changes in the international communication situation, focus on following the laws of international communication, and continuously improve the ability of the host of foreign communication.

4. Strategies for constructing the image of the presenter in the context of international communication

The image construction of international communication facilitators plays a particularly important role in the building of China's international communication capacity, which is related to their overall personal qualities and is also influenced by the shaping of their personal brand image. To strengthen China's international communication capacity building, it is necessary to reshape the image of the presenter, accelerate the construction of a rejuvenated audio language image, a personalised body language image, and an international make-up image, so as to highlight China's characteristics and bring them into line with international standards.

4.1. Rejuvenated Audible Language Images

The creation of a diverse, three-dimensional and personalised image of the presenter's medium relies heavily on a change in reporting style.^[3] In the context of international communication, the host should break the traditional broadcasting mode of seriousness, homogeneity and pattern, incorporate personal emotions into the report, inject fresh vitality, and use rich network language, expression of character personality and friendly tone and other forms of expression to draw closer to the emotional distance with the audience, so as to make the broadcasting of the audible language sample more youthful.

4.1.1. Internet slang

The figurative, concise and easy-to-remember features of Internet buzzwords make them important

terms for cross-cultural communication. The use of Internet buzzwords can both accurately convey meaning and quickly close the emotional distance with the audience. Therefore, the moderator should cater for the communication habits of Internet users, enhance their own "sense of the net", the extensive use of Internet buzzwords, so that the audience is more receptive. For example, Zhu Guangquan, who is regarded by netizens as the "King of Ten Thousand Words" in the CCTV hosting world, is well known for his frequent use of such golden phrases as "If the earth doesn't explode, we won't take a holiday" in his news broadcasts. His segments, which often rhyme continuously and are catchy, have adapted to the communication habits of the Internet language and attracted many young fans to watch the news programme, which shows the strong influence of Internet buzzwords that are easy to spread and diffuse.

4.1.2. Expression of individuality

The external presenter is first and foremost a person with a personality profile, and secondly a spokesperson for the State. Therefore, it is necessary to weaken the official ideology of national symbols, so that foreign communication presenters can appear in the audience's field of vision as independent individuals, which can alleviate the aversion of the people of other countries to the political ideology of the presenters, and eliminate the communication barriers. The presenter should focus on personalised language expression, supplemented by official discourse, to give more play to personality traits and develop a strong personal style and recognition. For example, Wang Bingbing, a reporter of the China Central Radio and Television (CCTV), accidentally became popular by virtue of her personal charisma. CCTV did not overemphasise her status as a reporter when building Wang Bingbing's personal IP, but rather focused on enlarging her own charisma, which made Wang Bingbing become the "top stream of CCTV". On the contrary, other media intended to create a second "Wang Bingbing" approach has failed, the reason is to put the cart before the horse, over-emphasis on the official status of the character, compression of the character's personality expression of space, difficult to leave a deep impression on the audience.

4.1.3. Kindly tone

The ideology of the international audience tends to emphasise the individual and weaken the collective consciousness. Therefore, a civilian approach to communication should be adopted to enhance the sense of intimacy between the presenter and the audience by making the international communication presenter a friend who talks and interacts with the audience through a cordial tone of voice and humane expression, rather than a propagandist who stands on a high pedestal. This kind of expression, which is full of true feelings, is easier to be accepted by international audiences, and gives the Chinese voice more temperature and depth. Taking host Bai Yansong as an example, his live broadcast of the 2018 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Qingdao Summit) was guided by full enthusiasm and cordiality, supported by fluent and natural language, and gained recognition from a wide range of audiences on the basis of both adhering to the country's stance and expressing sincere attitudes, and reaped excellent communication effects.

4.2. Personalised body language images

International communication in an integrated media environment is mainly transmitted through audiovisual forms such as television programmes and short videos. The body language of the presenter is also part of the visual communication and plays a role in supplementing the information and regulating the atmosphere. Enriching the host's facial expressions and gestures and other body language can effectively shape the host's personality characteristics, forming a unique personal image, deepening the audience's impression, thus enhancing the communication effect.

4.2.1. Facial expression

Facial expressions express specific emotional tendencies and create a sense of communication through the co-ordination of three parts: the eyes, the mouth and the zygomatic muscles. The presenter should not only wear a smile, but also should not neglect the change in the eyes. The presenter should first ensure that the eyes are sparkling and give a high spirited look. Secondly, switch your eyes in line with the need to express your emotions, so that you become animated and natural, able to attract the attention of the audience. In addition, when using eye contact, pay attention to the angle and time of gaze, grasp the principle of moderation, let the eyes to speak, enhance the sense of interaction. The hosts of many talk shows are particularly good at using facial expressions. When they speak of touching stories, they have a moving expression; when they speak of sad stories, they have a furrowed brow, and their demeanour changes in many ways, which makes them fascinating to watch.

4.2.2. Gestures

Gestures are also one of the means of expression that cannot be ignored in foreign communication.

The natural and appropriate use of hand movements can show the facilitator's relaxed state and drive the audience to relax into an immersive experience. At the same time, setting different hand movements according to different contents deepens the audience's impression on the one hand, and enlivens the atmosphere and adjusts the audience's mood on the other. However, care should also be taken not to use hand movements deliberately or frequently, but to do so with feeling, ease and naturalness. In the CCTV host competition, contestant Feng Shuo was interviewing the mother of demining hero Du Fuguo, when Du's mother was moved to tears, Feng Shuo hurriedly hugged and comforted Du's mother, a hug that made many viewers weep. It can be seen that the moderator's behaviour in a particular situation can trigger the emotional resonance of the audience and mobilise the emotional atmosphere. In a word, the host's sitting posture, movement and expression should be smooth and true, forming a unique style without pretence.

4.3. Internationalised instrumental make up image

Make-up and instrumentation is the element that most directly affects the audience's first impression of the presenter, and is an indispensable part of the presenter's image building.^[4] With the internationalisation of the audience's aesthetic level, China's original nationalised oriental aesthetic tendency should be changed and adjusted towards an international style of East-West fusion aesthetics. China's traditional square forehead, square chin, wide face of the national character face has long dominated the mainstream, even in the face of the onslaught of the current emerging net face has not been transformed. However, if you want to open up the international market and gain the love of international netizens, you may want to try to develop your make-up in the direction of a high-class face, highlighting your national characteristics while integrating international trends. The image of the host's make-up and instrumentation is mainly adapted to the style and reality of the programme. The presenter's make-up is clean and simple, while highlighting the features of the presenter's oriental face to deepen the audience's impression. In addition, the presenter's clothing and accessories should not be too exaggerated to serve the programme. 2019 China and the United States anchor dialogue event, Liu Xin wore a light blue suit, simple clothing and colour combinations with its calm and steady attitude and unassuming dignified atmosphere into one, especially a piece of emerald she wore to complement the clothing, vaguely conveying a "would rather be broken than broken" determination to win.^[1]

To sum up, the image shaping of international communication presenters can be explored in two directions, i.e. vocal language and paralanguage, and the image shaping strategy that not only shows Chinese characteristics but also meets the international trend can be explored at the levels of oral expression, body movement, and instrumental make-up.

5. Conclusions

As the spokesperson of the national image and the "watchdog" of international public opinion, the shaping of the image of international communication moderators is an important means of enhancing the power of international communication. In the face of the wave of globalisation and the complex public opinion environment, foreign communication presenters should adhere to the national position and integrate into the trend of the times. Starting from the three aspects of audio language image, body language image and make-up and instrumental image, they should create a youthful audio language image through the use of Internet buzzwords, individual expression and friendly tone, and at the same time, create personalised body language through facial expressions and gestures, together with international make-up and instrumental image, so as to shape the personalised image of the presenter, instead of shaping the image of the presenter as a face or a labelled presenter.

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