

Dilemmas and Strategies of Personalized Communication in Omni-media Era

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Abstract: *Traditional ways of hosting and the single media image have made the audience in the omni-media era feel aesthetic fatigue. In order to break this bottleneck, the hosts should make full use of the strategy of personalized communication by means of innovating their media image, professional ability, personal qualities, and so on. Based on the current theory, this paper effectively refines and complements the concept of personalized communication to explore its new features in the era of convergence media. It reveals the important role of personalized communication in practice and puts forward some dilemmas that should be paid attention to. Finally, it provides new strategies for the promotion and transformation of the hosts in the omni-media era in terms of image, skill, content, and platform.*

Keywords: *personalized communication; host; transformation strategy*

1. Introduction

The host is the manifestation of the will of the media. In traditional TV programs, the host always plays a necessary and important role. However, with the development of science and technology, the emergence of network communication technology makes us gradually enter the era of all-media. The communication mode of text, radio, television and other media has brought many opportunities and challenges to the host. Along with this idea, we must explore the new communication mode of the host in the era of integrated media -- personalized communication.

2. Review on the personalized communication of the hosts

2.1 The Definition and features of personalized communication

Professor Chen Hong defines personalized communication as a specific concept "The host mobilizes various elements with freedom to spread information to the audience by means of personalized communication. The audience directly perceives the appearance and manner, language connotation and personal charm of the host". Thus, it can be summarized that the personalized communication of the host is a comprehensive performance, which is based on good literary skills and an excellent mentality. Then, the individuality and charm of the host will be shown with "personalized" emotions and features. The host can not be separated from the program but complements it. It should be noted that the host's "personality" should be born from their nature, which is a stable and true "mainstream personality" formed and perfected from social practice and book reading which improve their cultural literacy and cultivate their sentiment.

Three features of personalized communication are to be summarized: quasi-interpersonal communication, information carrier, and emotional communication of mass communication. The host works as a carrier of information for a wide range of communication activities, which allows the audience to see the appearance of a vivid person, thus creating an intimate atmosphere similar to interpersonal communication. At the same time, differing from the way of daily emotional interaction, it can resonate with human emotions. Therefore, personalized communication is a more in-depth and connotative way of emotion transmission.

2.2 New features of personalized communication in omni-media era

2.2.1 Socialized Preference

Currently, people are fond of and heavily rely on new media. social media, a new type of media emerges in such an era. The host of social networking, such as short-form videos, can constantly communicate and interact with the users, making them directly participate in this socialized mimetic environment.

Such socialized feature gradually underscored in personalized communication has transformed the communication model of the program into a new pattern characterized by socialized preference. The intimate performance of the host, traditionally, no longer meet the need of Internet users who are deeply rooted in a culture of some community and even expect a special "distance". The traditional programs do have their limits, while networkings of short-form videos move towards the diversity of their works. For example, videos of hosts who present their workplaces and interesting episodes while working, can make the actual way of working and environment accessible to the audience and demystify the profession of the host.

In the social context, participants express their opinions through comments and giving a like, so that the personalized communication is free from time, place, and location. For example, journalist Wang Bingbing, an internet celebrity, has created her own blog on Bilibili to regularly share videos of her work and life. One of her videos, a winter-themed vlog reaches a playback amount of as much as 24.26 million views. She also records a video to answer questions from her subscribers. Due to the high interaction, netizens comment that "Bingbing is so down to earth" and her popularity is greatly increased. Not only do the audience receive the content, but they also directly and concretely perceive the tone of voice and physical appearance of the host presented in the creation, thus feeling a stronger sense of interactivity and sociability.

2.2.2 Rich and multidimensional performance

If the host makes a deliberate gesture to purposely seek intimacy, or show a flawless image mechanically, an impression of deliberation, affectation, and falsehood will be left to their audience. The audience in the era of new media are delighted to hear and see the other dimension of the host beyond their fixed label since they are not satisfied with the traditional show with a single expression and pattern. They prefer to interact with a host with a vivid attitude and personality whose performance is rich and multidimensional in the eyes of the public. The principal reason for this preference is that a condescending and serious screen image rather than a rich and living one could not be easily accepted, for the latter can quickly shorten the transmission distance and heighten the communication effect.

Rich and multidimensional performance indicates a new tendency in the era of convergence media: to respect the diversity of aesthetic values and preferences of the audience. The keynote of personalized communication precisely lies in such an equal mode of communication. Here is one example: a hilarious short video about an undesigned error of the host has been viewed 1.58 million times and has received broad comments. Errors and grandstanding should definitely be set as a role model for a bigger communication effect. However, the above example lively demonstrates that the audience in the full-media era is eager for the existence of a real human being instead of a fixed way for personality. The hosts sometimes showing weakness and facing difficulties will boost their authenticity. Given the requirement of authenticity, a fact should also be noted is that it is impossible for the hosts to perform every aspect of their personality which is constrained in a certain category within a specific time stipulated by the media platform and moral values.

3. Dilemmas of personalized communication in omni-media era

3.1 Excessive liberation of personality

The externalized performance of a program as a whole is the hosts whose personalization is complementary and consistent with the style of the program and its media. The audience will not obtain perceptual cognition if the hosts themselves are not especially characteristic; they will not accept it as well if the hosts pursue an eccentric style, or they can not be consistent with the content to communicate. Consequently, a balance should be found by the host in personalized communication.

Recent years have witnessed a stable improvement of the dominant status of the hosts, thus mass media in China take advantage of various kinds of medium for the development of hosts' individuality

and personal charm. Some media attempt to increase their audience rating with exaggerated statements and eye-catching images, but they are often counterproductive. The excessive liberation of personality often plays a negative role in the communication effect. For example, some hosts record their personal life without any reservation on the social platform or completely throw the reins to their characters. They only pay attention to self-appreciation but forget that their image of media should be implemented in the program. As a result, the audience only temporarily memorize the image of the host, unable to have a more profound association with the program. Therefore, communication behaviors in the performance of personality must be regulated and personality in the program is not reckless. No matter how unique a personality is, it is difficult to spread provided that it is not accepted by the public.

3.2 Excessive amusement of personality

For instance, the event that a host kneels to fans in a live broadcast for more media data is an embodiment of excessive amusement of personality. The host is trained for audience-oriented consciousness which is not to win attention with low-taste performances. Again, a balance should be found which is based on rich and experienced communication skills. The respect for the audience is by no means excessive entertainment. Therefore, to respect the audience is not to blindly afford people new entertainment and pleasure, and other information without spiritual connotation, but to correctly lead public opinion and spread meaningful and valuable information.

In the time of marketization, the information disseminated is more and more shallow. Some media carry out a lot of publicity on their anchors' private life to grab attention. As a result, viewers instead feel that the anchors are shallow and boring, undermining the public attribute of TV media. Different from the excessive liberation of personality, the amusement here refers to the fact that communication behavior becomes more and more entertaining to cater to the audience paying too much attention to the entertainment programs to pursue the commercial value and market effects.

3.3 Homogenization of personality

Characteristics from copying and plagiarism are only a flash in the pan. Homogenized personality not only hinders what gives the personality a full play but also easily causes aesthetic fatigue, making the individuality of the host shapeless. For example, if there are too many hosts of affinity, the audience will look forward to the personality of the sense of "distance" and "mystery". The popularity of the reporter Wang Bingbing from CCTV embodies her fresh and natural personality amid a large number of serious reports. The key is to find common ground that everyone agrees on where the empathy with the audience is established, then we can achieve effective communication.

What calls for special attention is that each program has its own features, so the style of the host should complement the content of the program. Only in this way can the audience resonate with the connotation, so as to truly give recognition to the program. A manifestation of not grasping the significance of personalized communication is that if one type of mode is more attractive to the audience, then everyone is rushing forward to imitate. As a result in consequence, the audience is limited to superficial information and seldom correctly understand the truth.

3.4 Falsification of personality

In personalized communication, the hosts should never over-beautify and add a label not compatible with themselves. Falsification of personality will eventually be exposed in the details during their transformation from the stage to real life. This not only does harm to communication but also goes against their public image and the platform. Although the character setting is easy to shape if it is too far from the reality of the individual, the audience always find something odd, and then, their public persona is ruined instantly.

Nowadays, there are many celebrities who are essentially different from their established labels of "scholar-tyrant" and "charitarian". And some immoral stars even violate the law, which is completely inconsistent with what they used to be portrayed. Those who practice fraud and deceive the audience will certainly be resisted by the audience and the industry. Therefore, the announcer and host must firmly oppose personality of which the outside and the inside are not in agreement and always be in awe of the art. Personalized communication is not to falsify hosts in a gorgeous cloak, but to give full play to their advantages on the basis of their own personality, which embodies the personal charm of the hosts in the way of equal personality.

4. The strategies of personalized communication in omni-media era

4.1 Character—to build the personality and create a new media image

Generally speaking, hosts who the public already has a stereotype can make use of the freshness brought by the deconstruction of themselves for innovation. This requires the hosts to break the single fixed personality on their own merits, overcome the stereotype, and establish a novel personality that the audience is not familiar with but accords with the tonal nature of the program. The novel personality is not necessarily reflected on radio and television, but also on social media. The point is to give the audience a fresh but pleasing sense of strangeness. As communication in omni-media era is characterized by both sound and frame, it is necessary to make full use of language and paralanguage for personalized communication and adopt a two-pronged approach in both hearing and vision. With a more approachable way of communication, the hosts can make up for the lack of closeness with the audience, and create a new media image.

At the same time, attention should also be paid to the fact that the audience's taste is ever-changing. The image of the host can not be done once and for all which requires constantly making adjustments on a stable basis to adapt to the communication rhythm of the convergence media. The establishment of personality is obtained through repeated practice, and after feedback, it needs to be constantly revised and strengthened. Besides, the hosts should pay attention to cultivating their own unique temperament after work, constantly enrich their knowledge and accomplishment in life, accumulate profound cultural literacy, and learn more about new information, so as to apply culture and knowledge to the work of hosting. In this way, a deeper impression will be left on the audience.

4.2 Distance—to handle details appropriately and enhance the spread of emotion

The hosts themselves should consciously play the role of their personality as a kind of creative practice. In the specific strategy of personalized communication, the innovation of ideas, the balance of themes, and the transformation of subject perspective are realized. The core of its content refers to the emotional essence of human beings, in which the emotional communication and exchange are enhanced, so they can interact and get closer to the audience, making the effectiveness of communication enhanced. It is necessary to practice personalized communication with a positive attitude and make it a leading role.

At the same time, it is necessary to note that although personalized communication is the performance of the hosts' personal characteristics, it should not deviate from their original aspiration of the broadcast in order to win the favor of the audience, they need to handle details appropriately. The details must be based on facts, affective and reasonable. For example, the host Yang Lan whose talk shows are always wise and creative, communicates cordially and warmly with guests during the conversation, expresses her views in witty language, and asks thought-provoking questions. However, to give full play to their personality regardless of the occasion and time will cause disgust among the guests, resulting in poor audience perception. Due to the existence of characteristic personality, the authority of the media will be weakened, so the distance should be tested repeatedly and finally achieve a balance. In daily life, the hosts are to focus on the exploration, cultivation, and improvement of their own personalities over a long period of time. As a result, their personality can withstand the public critical vision and the test of time.

4.3 Content—to promote from communicators to producers

Due to the unprecedented prosperity of information resources, the quality of content is often the focus of the modern audience. Therefore, personalized characters in the new media era are inseparable from the support of high-quality content, otherwise, it will not be long-lasting. In the past, the hosts often took on the functions of broadcasting and transition, so they always were labeled as "talkers". Nowadays, hosts of high popularity can all output their own content. Therefore, in the new era, hosts are not limited to the expression but are also able to produce content that is not only in textual form but other specialties that can be demonstrated.

The idea that content dominates everything is always the timely trend of the new media era, which requires mass production of content in line with the propagation law of new media. The hosts should make efforts to be content producers in their professional fields, rather than merely work as a "microphone" hosting programs. In addition, creativity brings freshness and scarcity because people

are creative. For example, another identity label of the host Kanghui is the content producer in the vlog field. Another example is the former CCTV host Li Xiaomeng who has babysitting classes for young mothers. The parenting experience she shared on various social network platforms is quite influential which has won a lot of praise and has more than 8 million fans following. In the era of new media, those hosts who do not have the ability to produce content will eventually be knocked out by the times.

4.4 Platforms—to build personal IP and strengthen network sensitivity

Nowadays, the mainstream media are gradually adapting to the features of the short video network: mobile, fragmented and socialized. From the perspective of omni-media, cyber celebrity journalists and hosts are becoming a standard way of mainstream media for integrative development. Numerous mainstream media are making use of the new media platform in order to further expand their influence and communication capacity through new forms of expression such as short videos to build a personal IP of the host. Personalized communication should establish strong ties between the media and the public, products, and users, thus forming a circle and community centered on the main body of the communication. The hosts are the core role of the video with their personal and subjective consciousness rather than a single symbol. Therefore, the hosts cultivate their own brand value and broaden their appeal.

Personalized communication should take the advantages of the environment into play, and the activation energy from the platform is also a support to the personality of the host. Furthermore, platforms differ from their media atmosphere, which greatly influences the presentation and creation of the host's artistic style, so personalized communication should be adjusted accordingly to the platform. For example, on the official and mainstream media platforms, the external image of the host should be serious and dignified, whose language manner conveys a temperament of maturity and modesty. In the contrast, on the new media platform, the image of the host should be changed by means of strengthening network sensitivity, keeping up with the hot spots of current events, and spreading the hot news.

On the new media platform, the initiative is often in the hands of the audience, therefore, a new “gives and receives” relation is formed. Whether the hosts can grasp the attention of the audience has become the key issue to retain the flow. The image of the hosts is lively, fresh, and approachable which requires the hosts who carry out mainstream thoughts to be down to earth to communicate with the audience wholeheartedly.

5. Conclusion

Personalized communication is a high-quality way of communication, which combines the characteristics of interpersonal communication, making the host communicate with the audience equally. It will endow the audience with a sense of identity, so the hosts must have the courage to break the fixed mode, set up personality on their own advantage, serve the audience with an equal state of mind, and improve the quality of the program. At the same time, attention should be paid to the grasp of persistence and authenticity in personalized communication, standardize their communication behaviors, and show their personality charm in an all-around way with the platform. The final point is that the maturity of personality can not be realized overnight which takes a long time to accumulate and practice. Only by constantly strengthening their cultural literacy and professional ability can the host solve the anxiety about "de-hosting" and create superior programs that stir the heart of people and inspire the society.

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