

Original Research Article

Media Happiness of the Audience of “Mukbang”

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Abstract: This paper studies the media happiness of live broadcast audiences in the process of communication from the We media live broadcasting platform. Through the analysis of the live broadcast platform “Mukbang” cases, we find that “Mukbang” has the effect of Mood switching utility, Interpersonal utility and Self confirmation utility on the audiences, which can alleviate the loneliness of the audiences, meet the expectations of the audience, and have a positive impact on the audiences’ media happiness.

Keywords: Media Happiness; Mukbang; Audience

1. Introduction

With the development of the Internet and the popularization of intelligent mobile devices, live broadcast and short video, as a form of network transmission, are integrated into people’s lives, so that People can contact the world more conveniently in the fragmented time. In this context, “Mukbang” is rising rapidly. “Mukbang” the anchor carries on the appropriate exaggeration and the entertainment while having the live meal, not only satisfies the “Mukbang” audience for the food seeking psychology, but also a kind of Companion to the audience’ lonely psychology. For a long time, the discussion of happiness is the focus of people’s attention. In the era of Web2.0, people have further improved the degree of attention to happiness. The papers will explore “Mukbang” program to ease loneliness audience how to meet the expectations of the audience and affect the audience happiness.

2. Literature review

2.1 Research on “Mukbang”

“Mukbang”, which means “eating broadcast live”, originated in South Korea and was introduced into China in 2014, rose in the form of short video in 2015. In 2016, the live broadcasting industry began to develop, “Mukbang” ushered in a period of development opportunities. In the first year of live broadcasting, it developed crazily, and “Mukbang craze” emerged in China. As an imported product, a small part of the domestic research on “Mukbang” is still in the research of the definition and development history. Most of the researches mainly analyze the reasons for the rise of “Mukbang” from the perspective of communication and economics.

On the one hand, from the perspective of communication to analyzes the “Mukbang craze” in China and the causes behind it. Wang Yingying (2016) defined “Mukbang” from three aspects of anchor image, interactive form and scene layout, she believed that the reason for “Mukbang craze” was that “Mukbang” could meet the self-realization of the anchor and also meet the audience’s psychological needs. Feng Liqing (2017) used “5W” to analyze the communication mode of “Mukbang”, and found that the reason for the “Mukbang craze” is that the anchor of “Mukbang” comes from ordinary people in life, which can make audiences feel the same; the types of live broadcast content are diverse, which can meet the needs of different groups of people; finally, with the communication advantages of network communication platform, so that “Mukbang” is accepted by the public.

On the other hand, it studies the mode of “Mukbang” and discusses its commercial value. Xie Zuoshi, Professor of Zhejiang University of Finance and economics, and Professor Zhao Wei, doctoral supervisor of School of economics of Zhejiang University, jointly believe that the development of “Mukbang” economy is a manifestation of the improvement of national living standards. The attention and development of this kind of catering related industries benefit from the development of network technology and the improvement of hardware construction. Through the analysis of the content production mode of “Mukbang”, Bai Nasha (2016) believes that as a new economic model should attract users with high-quality “Mukbang” content, so as to trigger value realization and support content creation. The vigorous development of “Mukbang” industry needs to start from the needs of users, Establish a mature and stable ecosystem of content production, consumption and realization.

2.2 On the relationship between media and happiness

Using new media and advanced media technology can make people feel happy. For example, using the latest mobile phones,

tablets and laptops, connected to the current fastest 5G network, can increase people's happiness experience. Kavanaugh (2005) and other scholars found that internet use is directly proportional to people's perceived quality of life, because the Internet can effectively promote interpersonal communication and thus improve social relations. Lee (2008) and other scholars through the survey of Beijing, Hong Kong and Taiwan show that the new media technology represented by the network and smart phone can effectively improve the quality of life and then enhance the sense of happiness.

Media content also has an important impact on the happiness of the audience to a certain extent. First, if the content provided by the media meets the needs of the audience, it will help to improve the happiness of the audience; second, according to the training theory, if there are too many crimes and violence in the media, the probability of the audience perceiving similar events happening to themselves will greatly exceed the incidence of real social violence and crime, which will significantly reduce the sense of security of the audience. Thus, the sense of happiness of the audience decreases.

Through the survey of network behavior, it is found that leisure and entertainment can't significantly improve life satisfaction, but the audience who use the Internet as a tool, such as learning and working through the network, can improve their life satisfaction. Foreign scholars have found that a large number of TV programs and advertisements, especially the commercial TV content represented by the United States, inculcate the values of consumerism and establish the materialist money worship concept among TV viewers, which makes them unsatisfied and unhappy with their existing life.

Yuan Aiqing (2017) made an in-depth and detailed study on media and audiences happiness from an interdisciplinary perspective and combined with the classic theories of communication and psychology, and creatively proposed the concept of Media Happiness. Yuan Aiqing pointed out that media happiness is a subjective happiness experience mediated by media. Media happiness includes not only the increase of positive emotional experience, but also the decrease of negative emotional experience: First, it is not affected by life events in the objective category (social status, economic status, etc.); the second is not recognized by a formal evaluation system (a subjective cognition); the third is a holistic comprehensive feel.

The academic concept of media well-being not only highly summarizes the previous research results on the relationship between media and happiness, but also provides a new theoretical perspective on how to explain the connotation of the Chinese Dream, how to improve the happiness of the people, and how to build a harmonious society.

3. On “Mukbang”

3.1 Development status of “Mukbang”

“Mukbang” is a food reality show from South Korea. It is a paid network live broadcast to watch the process of cooking and enjoying food at home. In 2014, after South Korean netizens put the “Mukbang” video of Park Shuyan, a “Mukbang” anchor, on the online video platform, the “Mukbang” program has become popular in various regions of Asia, and even more popular in China.

We media industry has experienced the development process from Blog, Microblog, Wechat public account, short video to the current live broadcast form. In 2016, we media industry received strong attention from the capital market, which led to its rapid development. In 2016, with the blowout development of the live broadcasting industry, the “Internet celebrity economy” reached the peak of development. Compared with January of the same year, the coverage rate of live broadcast in we media platform increased by 249.2%, and 45% of the anchor's monthly income was between 8000 and 15000 yuan. Low threshold and high income make netizens want to share a share.

With the rapid development of we media, live video can be processed into a short video and shared to the major media, so that it can be transmitted many times, which can well expand the audience. The two pronged approach of “Short video + Mukbang” enables “Mukbang” to increase the advantages of cross time and cross region on the basis of retaining the strong interactive characteristics.

Man is a social animal, afraid of loneliness. Park Shuyan said that the reason why she started eating live was to make the audience feel like she was having dinner with her friends, and netizens' comments on her video were that is good for eating. In 2012, the number of people living alone in South Korea reached 25.8%, which is expected to rise to 32.7% by 2030. The number of people living alone in China rose from 6% in 1990 to 14.6% in 2013, more than 58 million. According to the data, the number of people living alone is still rising. The solitary audiences seek to accompany the audience for dinner by watching “Mukbang” and chat with the anchor, so as to eliminate the loneliness when eating alone. The rapid development of we media has laid a foundation for the development of “Mukbang”, and the increase of living alone population has added fuel for “Mukbang”.

3.2 Communication characteristics of “Mukbang”

The main characteristics of “Mukbang” are analyzed by “5W”.

From the perspective of communicators' image, we can divide the “Mukbang” anchor into two types, namely, Beauty type and Civilian type. Beauty anchor refers to good figure, beautiful, they will dress up before live broadcast, which is a common feature of this kind of anchor. But the civilian anchor shows people in their daily images, not deliberately dressed up, just like ordinary people in daily life.

According to the content of “Mukbang”, so far, “Mukbang” can be divided into two categories: one is eats several times as much food as ordinary people at a time, and gains attention by challenging the ordinary people several times of the food within the specified time; the other is daily “Mukbang”, which usually broadcast their daily meals and chat with audiences.

From the perspective of communication channels, “Mukbang” has spread from a single we media live broadcasting platform to the current diversified and comprehensive channel communication. “Mukbang” anchor live on the live platform and interact with audiences in real time. After the live broadcast, the broadcaster will share the live video to other websites or clip it first and

then share it. By editing a long live video of dozens of minutes or even hours into a short “Mukbang” video, and through special effects processing to make it more delicate, these short videos can break through the limitations of time and space, and can be transmitted many times, and audiences can watch them at any time. Due to the limited time and patience of the audience, the edited short videos are more popular than the original live videos.

From the perspective of the audience, the audience of “Mukbang” is mainly young users after 80s, 90s and 00s, while the audience’s occupation is mostly students, waiters and other Internet users who have more free time. They watch live video in order to kill time. According to the 46th “Statistical Report on Internet Development in China” published by CNNIC, as of June 2020, the number of Internet users in China has reached 940 million, the number of live network users has reached 562 million, accounting for 59.8% of the total Internet users, and the scale of live reality TV users has reached 186 million, accounting for 19.8% of the total Internet users. Among them, the age of users watching the live broadcast has gone from 20-29 years old to younger post-00s, and the occupation of the audience is mostly students, accounting for 23.7%. This group of people have a lot of free time. In order to relieve boredom, watching live broadcast is the most convenient and economical way to spend their leisure time.

From the perspective of audience feedback, the main feedback mode of “Mukbang” is in the form of bullet screen. Bilibili is also one of the earliest video websites to use bullet screen function in mainland China. The appearance of bullet screen, the combination of so-called ACG culture and personal live broadcast mode, has improved the stickiness of interaction between the anchor and audiences.

4. An analysis of the audience’s psychology of “Mukbang”

4.1 Mood switching utility

In modern society, people take thin as beauty and love beauty. Therefore, all kinds of healthy weight loss methods on the Internet, such as exercise, unhealthy weight loss, such as diet. Both healthy and unhealthy weight loss methods have a common feature: healthy diet. In daily life, in order to suppress one’s appetite and satisfy his appetite for delicious food, watching “Mukbang” has become a priority. The anchor of “Mukbang” faces the camera and places delicious food. While eating the food, the anchor describes the taste of the food. Listening to the anchor’s chewing sound, under the mutual stimulation of vision and hearing, those who want to keep their body shape “console oneself with false hopes” imitate Buddha and eat the food themselves, and they get great satisfaction. The audience can escape from the daily constraints on food and release their desire for food by watching “Mukbang”. Through stimulating food cooking methods or spectacular visual representation, it can cause appetite, even as a substitute. “Mukbang” plays the role of “companion”, which helps to reduce the loneliness and loneliness of the audience. The fast-paced life makes people’s sentiment fade gradually. Eating has the function of “accompany” outside the belly. With the development of the society, the ratio of people living alone is rising. Many young people leave their hometown to make a living. It may be a luxury for them to eat with their families. “Mukbang” can just satisfy such people and create a virtual company for them to eat together, bringing comfort to the audience.

“Mukbang” lets the audience relax and relieve boredom. With the rapid development of social economy, people’s life pressure is increasing and people’s happiness is declining. The tide of entertainment to death and money supremacy affects each individual in varying degrees. The “Mukbang” anchor chats with the audience, from time to time funny, in order to amuse the audience, let the audience eliminate the trouble of life.

4.2 Interpersonal utility

The utility of interpersonal relationship includes realistic interpersonal relationship and mimicry interpersonal relationship. Mimicry interpersonal relationship refers to the audience will feel familiar with the characters of the program they are watching. “Mukbang” brings audiences mimicry interpersonal relationship, which satisfies people’s desire for social interaction. In the live broadcast, the audience will not only ask the anchor what food they eat, but also talk about other topics, such as: “where did you buy the clothes? Height or weight? Etc. Audiences interact with the anchor through the bullet screen or the comment area. Some audiences will add private messages to generate offline relationships, which will develop into real interpersonal relationships and facilitate the two-way interaction between virtual and real life.

4.3 Self confirmation utility

People always like to take others as a reference to measure themselves. The audience of “Mukbang” takes the anchor as a benchmark, constantly thinking about the similarities and differences between themselves and the anchor, and makes corresponding evaluation. In the “Mukbang” video, the anchor’s recording site, furnishings, tableware and so on are a measure of the audience, such as “the same cup!” and “the background wall is very beautiful!” and so on. In the video, the anchor shares the food making methods and techniques. Some audiences will make it with the anchor to confirm whether they can master the skill.

5. Conclusion

“Mukbang” is the common product of internet live broadcasting and social development. The popularity of “Mukbang” also reflects the living conditions and psychological characteristics of some social people in the current era. The development of “Mukbang economy” is exactly the performance of the overall improvement of the national economy. With the development of Internet technology and the improvement of hardware construction, this kind of industry related to people’s food and clothing will also receive greater development and attention. Therefore, it is urgent to improve the content quality of “Mukbang”. As a product of “eating culture”, it is also inevitable to make contributions to the spread of Chinese cuisine. At the same time, in “Mukbang”, more value and significance are given to ordinary eating behavior, but behind the audience’s pursuit is loneliness and expectation. The elimination of loneliness and satisfaction of expectation through media will be the beginning of obtaining happiness from

media.

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