

Chinese Online Celebrities' Long-lasting Vitality Research

--From the perspective of interactions with fans

Dan Wu, Xingyue Zheng, Yanzhu Chen

Abstract

Nowadays, a Sina Weibo user with a large fan foundation can become an online celebrity, but not all online celebrities can maintain their long-lasting vitality. Applying Randall Collins' interactive ritual theory, we visually and textually analyzed the blogs published by Papi Jiang and Zhang Dayi from 2016 to 2017, to figure out how online celebrities can maintain their long-lasting vitality through interactions with fans.

Introduction

In March 2016, several companies represented by Logic Show and the ZhenFund invested 12 million yuan in the Papi Jiang, a self-media on Sina Weibo. In April, with the cooperation of Logic Show, the first video ad for Papi Jiang was sold for an amazing price of 22 million yuan. Industry insiders predict that the value of Papi Jiang may reach 300 million yuan. Since then, Papi Jiang has upgraded a transformation from self-entertainment, small-to-noise to high-quality content export. As a successful model for online celebrity realizing commercial liquidity, Papi Jiang, “the first online celebrity in 2016” has made more and more people realize the great potential of “online celebrity Economy”.

Excellent opening, but remember citations

As the development of Sina Weibo gradually matures, some Sina Weibo users with their own characteristics gradually have a stable fan base. One of their blogs may have been forwarded by hundreds of millions of people and a sentence that a Sina Weibo user has said quickly smashed into the Internet. The myth of overnight fame and overnight riches appearing in games, stocks, fitness, food, entertainment, and other fields have attracted more and more people creating their own “online celebrity road” in the prosperity of the mobile Internet era. Among various social platforms, Sina Weibo has continued to explore on the road of social interest and the commercial realization by relying on many high-quality content producers, gradually becoming the largest and most influential social platform. At the Weibo Impact Summit in 2016, Weibo announced that there

have been more than 1 billion monthly readings in 45 vertical fields, including 18 in more than 10 billion, and 430 million in revenues from media publishers through Weibo ads. The income from paid content such as rewards and paid subscriptions reached 470 million and Sina Weibo has become the most active new media platform in China without a doubt. Netizen and opinion leaders who are active on Sina Weibo have formed a powerful influence and appeal with a large number of fans. At the same time, they have brought numerous possibilities for their ways of realization.

“Online Celebrity Economy” can be said to be an economic method, it can also be said to be a social phenomenon, but it is inseparable from the interaction with fans. Although a Weibo user with a large fan base can become an online celebrity, it is not all online celebrities can maintain long-lasting vitality, and not all of them can realize the realization of traffic. Therefore, it is particularly critical that “how online celebrities interact with fans” and “why fans are loyal to them”.

Citations!

The sociologist Randall Collins suggests that interaction rituals are daily programmatic activities in which the opportunity encounter is exchanged by capital and emotions. Most phenomena in society are communicated by people and formed and maintained through various interactive ceremonies. Our group thinks that this can also apply to the interaction between online celebrities and fans in Sina Weibo.

By means of textual analysis of blogs posted by Papi Jiang and Zhang Dayi from 2016 to 2017, we want to figure out how online celebrities maintain long-lasting vitality with Randall Collins’s interactive ritual theory (IRS). First, we would illustrate the conceptual framework and literature review in two parts: the definition of online celebrity and the theoretical framework of interactive ritual chains. Then we use two typical examples, Zhang Dayi and Papi Jiang, analyzing the content of their blogs with IRS. After the analysis, we will try to answer the question that we put forward and discuss further steps.

Literature Review

Internet celebrities (Wanghong)

The advent of social media has brought a new type of celebrity. People who are not

well recognized in real life could utilize the Internet to perform as Internet celebrities. This new type of celebrity involves the practice of self-presentation on social media, which is presented by the creation of a unique online image and the use of an image to attract online eyeball (Ang & Welling, 2017). In China, no matter what social media platforms they emphasized on, people who have achieved influence based on the use of Internet have a unified name—Internet celebrities (CBN Data, 2016). They can range from would-be or unknown actors/actresses, experts in a specific field, for example, fitness trainers or photographers, and wealthy people who would love to show off their luxuries to young girls have a pretty face (Saul, 2016). While the label or actual identity differs, Internet celebrities all disclose their personal lives (Saul, 2016). and exhibit influence on many followers on social media platforms. Some of the most successful Chinese Internet celebrities have earned their living based on their online influence (CBN Data, 2016). Internet celebrities have been deemed as trusted members of their own online community; their followers rely on them for information, news, and opinion (Jia& Liu, 2017). In this study, we describe Internet celebrities as a kind of online opinion leaders who were likely to influence other persons on social media platforms.

Interactive ritual chain theory

The American scholar Randall Collins proposed the interactive ceremonial chain theory in 2003, which combines micro-analysis and macro-analysis of human interaction behavior and emotional motivation. The macroscopic social phenomenon is composed of microcosmic situations, and the chain relationship formed in the microcosmic context is the interactive ritual chain. Most of the phenomena in society are communicated by people and formed and maintained through various interactive ceremonies. Collins took people's conversations as an example to illustrate the elements and results of the interaction ritual. Conversations are the same as people singing together. They have topics of common concern and share common emotions. For the conversational person, the problem of discussion is not the most important, but they have common concerns, and neither side can break the conversation they have established together. Therefore, the elements of the interactive ritual include that multiple people gather in the same place and can influence each other, set restrictions on outsiders, have common objects or activities, and share common emotions (Collins, 2005).

Very well researched and presented.

We believe that this theory can apply to the online interactive communication behavior in the new media era. The elements of the interactive ceremonial chain are: 1. two or more than two people gather in the same place and can influence each other. Sina Weibo can provide a field of mutual attention. 2. set restrictions on outsiders. When groups in Weibo focus on a blogger because of their common focus, fans and bloggers often interact with each other on topics they know about, forming the cultural and unique symbolic characteristics of the group. "Passerby" may show the confusion of outsiders. 3. gather common concerns or activities. There are many sections of Weibo that guide users to participate in topic discussions. 4. share a common emotional or emotional experience. People participate in collective rituals through various forms such as forwarding, commenting, and praising. They look for similarities in virtual life, actively share their feelings, and express their own emotions.

When the elements are effectively synthesized and accumulated to a high degree of mutual attention and emotional sharing, participants will experience the following: 1. Group solidarity, feelings of membership. 2. Personal emotional energy. 3. Symbols representing groups. 4. maintain the moral sense of the group.

WAIT. Where is the theory you mentioned in the introduction?

Methods

1. Textual Analysis

This method refers to the use of structuralism semiotic analysis, content analysis, or discourse analysis to conduct academic research on the text of any media in media, film, and cultural studies (Chandler & Munday, 2011).

Need much more in each of these sections, as this is a paper just as much about the method as it is the theory and the analysis.

2. Visual Analysis

Analyzing the pictures, images or videos on their blogs.

We analyze the blogs posted by Papi Jiang and Zhang Dayi from 2016 to 2017. They both became popular in 2015 and stayed active in 2016. The year 2016 is an important year for them to maintain vitality and they made it. That's why we choose blogs content from 2016 to 2017.

Analysis

The generation means of interactive communication situation—taking Papi Jiang as an example

1. The topic of pain point selection

Papi Jiang seems herself as an extraordinary normal person, and perhaps it is precisely this attitude that makes herself more grounded and more appealing to fans. From the perspective of the topics, these videos combine current events. It also covers daily topics such as life, celebrities, entertainment, and sexual relations, and in the underlying reason, each video could not be separable from the word “interesting”. On one hand, Papi Jiang seize the time node perfectly, putting forward people’s common concern in the same festival; at the same time, she also thinks the topic that people often think about and discuss with. Papi Jiang has put a lot of slots in each video to attract the attention from the audience, making them laugh and expressing their approval.



Picture 1: Papi Jiang is showing her keyboard to pretend she is a keyboard man

This is a classical short video called <Keyboard Men>. Keyboard Men means people who Hide behind the virtual world, standing on the moral heights of unreasonable, irresponsible slams and insulting other people’s networks. They use their own keyboard to maliciously comment on things they don’t like, seemingly incarnation of justice. It is unjustifiable and hypocritical. Papi Jiang adorned “Keyboard Man” in the video and

selected a very representative language to strongly irony: “Whenever a young girl walks in the night and encounters an invasion, I will step forward.” (strike the keyboard) “Who lets you wear so little”, “If a doctor or a police officer is beaten, I’ll be the first to rush over” (strike the keyboard) “You deserve it!”. She cited a series of remarks on the Internet that was shameful, and in the end, she wrote “I wish all those keyboard men receive the punishment” to expressed the hatred of “Keyboard Man.”

What was the methodological process to get to these? Textual or visual analysis? How are they the same, different? What is a text, what is a visual?

2. Arouse strong sympathy from users

Collins said that during the interactive ritual, people hope to find and interact with objects which are equal with their symbolic capital because they can be emotionally satisfied in an “equal” position. Papi Jiang in the video does not have the same makeup as other online celebrities. In addition, she does not choose the gorgeous high-end shooting scene. Everything is a civilian character that was earth-shattering. We see a plain-looking, cheerful girl in her home playing exaggerated performances. The fresh, pleasant and positive images make the audience feel psychologically equal and unconsciously integrate into the video content.



Picture 2: Papi Jiang is recording the video randomly (only wearing a white shirt)

Moreover, Papi Jiang Positions in the group from people who born after 1980 to people who born after 2000. The topic selection is closely related to hot spots and pain points of the times, forming a focus of mutual attention with the audience. At the same time, they are good at weakening their central position and linking themselves with others in the interactive ceremony to build up group unity. For instance, “Let us be together” “Have you ever heard about...”, those naming method of this video title is undoubtedly

a presupposition for the audience, even if the audience does not have such a deep common feeling, it will take the initiative to bring in this kind of call-to-action text, resulting in a common emotional experience.

The Result of Interactive Communication Scenarios: Taking Zhang Dayi as an Example

Could this form of analysis have been done with the other, in conjunction? Why separate?

In order to cultivate relationships with fans, Zhang Dayi has given members ‘identity’ from the very beginning and used a voting method to let fans choose their own names to perceive their relationship with the family of bloggers. Among the many choices, according to the number of likes, ‘E cup’ was selected as the symbol of the fan group.



Picture3: Zhang Dayi's Weibo voting on the names of fans



Picture4: Zhang Dayi holds a raffle for fans on Weibo

How do you define symbols? What meanings are you ascribing to them?

1. Symbols representing groups and the establishment of membership

The most direct symbol is Zhang Dayi's mutual call with fans. "E Cup" and "Big Aunt" are two women's strong color codes that underscore Zhang Dayi's clear positioning of the group: women fans who need to buy women's clothes, which are not only convenient to create group unity, but also directly express the rejection of outsiders.

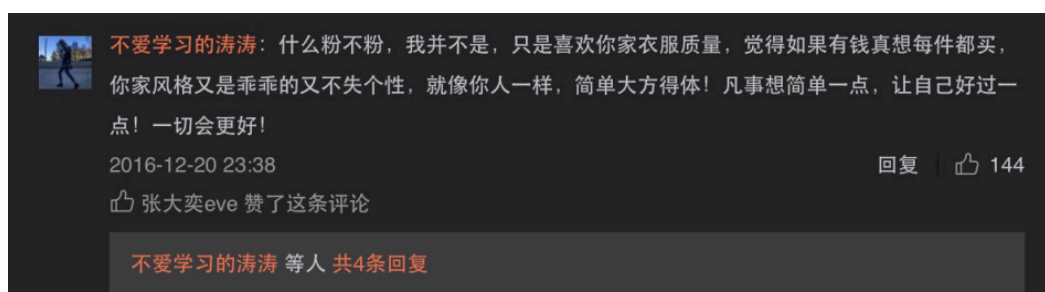
Zhang Dayi is at the center of the interactive ceremony and it is easy for members to have a psychological gap. However, she will weaken her central position in a timely manner: some clothes in her shop are selected by fans. Furthermore, she uses her own fashion taste to help fans improve themselves, but the most important thing is that Zhang Dayi will adjust her strategy in time according to the tastes of fans.

Such a process not only gives more power to the fans but also improves their own production efficiency. For fans, this kind of "power" that can be chosen independently strengthens the individual's emotional energy and deepens the feeling of membership.

2. Individual emotional energy maintenance

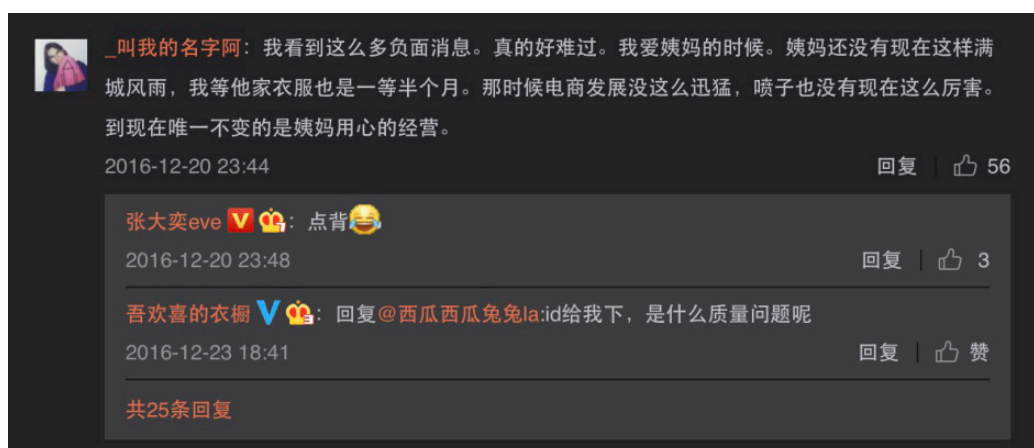
Participants of interactive ceremonies exchange long-term interaction rituals to convert short-term emotions. During participation in long-term stable emotions, a sense of attachment to the group gathered at this time, which is called "emotional energy". The fans' comments from Zhang Dawei's Weibo can reflect their emotional energy in the interaction with Zhang Dayi.

Zhang Dayi posted a microblog on December 20th, intended to reveal her negative feelings. At the same time, she attached fans' private letters which encouraged her. In the comments on this blog, we can obviously feel the emotional energy of the internal members of the group.

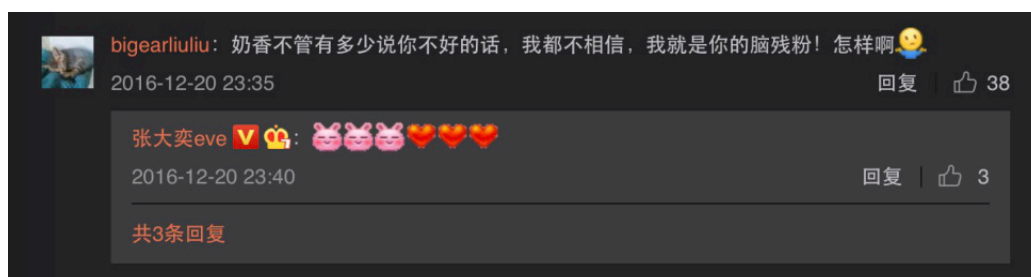


@Buaixuexidetaotao: "I am not a fan, I just like the clothes quality of your brand. I want to buy everything in your shop if I have lots of money. Your style is ambiguous without losing personality, just like you, simple and decent! Think of something simple

and make yourself better! Everything will be better!” Zhang Dayi gave him a “like”.



@Call my name: “I saw so many negative news. Really sad. When I started to love my aunt (nickname of Zhang Dayi), she hasn’t been so controversial now and I waited half a month for her clothes. At that time, the development of e-commerce was not so fast, and the anti-fans were not as powerful as it is now. The only thing that remains unchanged is the diligent operation of the aunt.” Zhang Dayi replied a crying emoji.



@bigearliuliu: “No matter how many people saying you are not good, I do not believe, I am your fangirl! What can you do to me? (Booth)” Zhang Dayi replied three hearts emoji.

From these three comments, we can see three levels of emotional energy, from “not only fans support” to “^{Interesting}rational love” to “no reason to support”. Different individuals are varied in emotional energy reserves because of the different intensity of the IRS involved.

As a key resource in the IRS market, emotional energy is always an important part that online celebrities want to maintain. Zhang Dayi always adheres to the principle of “thinking with her feet.” In addition to replying and praising the comments and forwarding of fans, she will promptly obtain the taste preferences and price of the fans according to the content and content of each Weibo post and then adjust her own

production line.

Discussion

Online celebrities who have a long-lasting vitality mean that their fans keep increasing at a stable pace and actively forward and comment on their blogs. And they keep producing new content of their own, maintaining fans loyalty. They can earn a living basing on their online influence, continuously taking up a large part of online-celebrities-market capital and having co-operation with big companies. In a word, they always have an active part in the capital of online-celebrities-market and have an influence on it in turn.

Did you need your method and your study to say these things?

There are two main ways that online celebrities can obtain economic benefits in Weibo. First, advertising endorsement. Because online celebrities have many fans, their strong communication power is favored by many advertisers. In 2016, online celebrities generated a total of 430 million in revenue through advertising. They managed to interact with their fans while satisfying the requirements of merchants by inserting advertisements into original content. Second, connect to online retailers. The biggest revenue for online celebrities comes from an online retailer. In 2016, online celebrities earned an annual revenue of 11.7 billion through Weibo, of which revenue generated through online retailer reached 10.8 billion. After many online celebrities became popular on Weibo, they opened some online stores in the apparel and cosmetics industries to attract fans to buy their products.

Moreover, online celebrities can seek capital investment and platform cooperation to ensure long-term operation. Online celebrities can attract many fans through their own content production, but not all online celebrities have the ability to generate cash flow. When online celebrities are unable to manage their own products, the involvement of capital and platforms is particularly important. Taking Zhang Dayi as an example, because of lack of content ability and ability to expand fans, she has sought cooperation with an e-commerce provider known as “online celebrities’ incubators”. In addition to providing brokerage services, this platform also helps online celebrities to do daily content operations, analyze past data, and expand fan circles. After online celebrities such as Papi Jiang received capital investment, the content production was more

specialized. The team operation ensures the diversity and long-term effectiveness of online celebrities' content creation. Therefore, with the gradual industrialization of online celebrities and increasingly fierce market competition, seeking capital investment and cooperating with platform institutions are the trend of the times and the necessary way to ensure the ability to generate cash flow and maintain the vitality of online celebrities.

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