

Study on the Persuading Factors of News Monographic Report

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Abstract - This study suggests that news monographic reports are an information organizing tool, and its purpose is not simply to present objective and comprehensive news and information, but to pass a specific meaning directivity to the audience according to certain logic. Therefore, a variety of persuasion means should be taken so as to let the audience to accept and understand the significance of a particular message, making the specific meaning imperceptibly influence the cognitive structure of the audience.

Index Terms - News feature stories, Persuade, Audience cognition

1. Introduction

News monographic reports carry a certain in-depth coverage for a news theme. Reports of this kind focus on narration, and some focus on comments, some focus on both the narration and comments. In content, news coverage generally conduct an in-depth, detailed, exhaustive coverage for relatively large and important news facts. It can also carry out a comprehensive presentation for the development of the news facts[1]. Therefore, news monographic reports emphasize the typical sense and guidance significance of the facts, and also the public relations, which determines the ultimate goal of news monographic report is not simply a statement of fact, but to convey information reflecting certain argument to the audience by some information organizing means which have a certain point and purpose, and influence the audience's existing attitudes. Thus, this "proof" type of information organizing model of news monographic reports actually presents the persuasion policy taken to persuade the audience to accept the core meaning reflected by the news reports.

2. The Characteristics of News Monographic Reports

The mainstream theory is generally believed that newspaper as the basic form of news reports can be divided into the following five categories—news, newsletter, reviews, investigative reports and news photos[2]. News monographic report is not divided out as a separate type of text. Some theories classify this kind of report as in-depth reports or combination reports. The fuzzy definition of this concept is mainly from the following two aspects: firstly, news monographic reports emphasize the in-depth of excavation and interpretation for a certain issue, which often take the form of in-depth reports; secondly, News monographic report does not have a fixed model, which is usually reported by a variety of

methods for continuous coverage. However, whatever the presentation form or reporting means the news monographic reports take, the core content is to give a concentrated, in-depth reports for a particular area of social life. Its contents is specific and have large social impact[3]. Therefore, the characteristics of news monographic reports are usually reflected in the following aspects.

A. Authenticity and Objectivity

Whether it is television feature films or news monographic reports, they both have stressed to reflect real life, and exclude fiction, which has laid a foundation for distinguishing the news monographic reports from the "special report" of the general newspaper advertising. Authenticity is the premise that news monographic reports exist.

B. Having High News Value

The themes of TV feature films or news monographic reports for newspapers are important news figures and their deeds in social and economic life at a certain period, big news events or the hot and difficult issues people are generally concerned about. So, they both have significant news value and dissemination significance. Judging from the themes presented, news monographic reports have a more profound ideological content, sharper themes, and larger information capacity compared with the general news reports.

C. Revealing a Profound Significance

News monographic report is not generally the kind of report which serves as disseminating information, nor the kind of report that only reports the fact of news. It is a kind of report that goes into the depths of the facts, explains and analyzes clearly people, objects, context and background involved, and finally reveals the deep meaning of news.

D. Reflecting the Ideology of the Current Mainstream Society

The ideology of news monographic report roots in the ideology of the journalism. Journalism is a social superstructure, and is decided by the economic base in the society. Economic base is the realistic foundation of the existence and development of the journalism. "Journalism develops as the productive forces develop, the level of productivity directly affects the development pace and size of journalism[4]." In a class society, a certain class, political party or social group master and control journalism, and report the news, comment with the journalism while continuously spreading their ideas and expressing their political views.

People who control the media tools, have the loudest voice “Media is not a neutral, knowledgeable or rational social events coordinator in essence, but to help reconstruct pre-set ideology”[5]. This is the reason why the journalism has such a strong class characteristic. Therefore, news monographic report collect information reflecting all aspects off life, and reconstruct such a information about a given topic, eventually forming a news topic which can reflect the current social mainstream ideology.

In summary, the news monographic reports are built on the basis of the principle of authenticity and objectivity, and the reported contents reveals a profound social significance. The social significance is often a reflection of the social mainstream ideology. However, social ideology as a systematic and theoretical value system, needs to cultivate people’s emotional identity, to achieve social control and to win the social support. This process of nurturing emotional identity is presented in the news monographic reports as follows, it persuades the audience to accept the core values reflected by these information with plenty of justifiable and logical news and information.

3. The Persuading Way of News Monographic Reports

In order to let the audience notice, understand, represent, remember, and finally even integrate the content with their original cognitive system, the news content needs a further organization. If the core values are believed by the audience to be true and be consistent, then a variety of ways should be adopted to increase the convincible effectiveness of news and information.

A. Using the Evidence from Witnesses

Direct observation is one of the basic and traditional conditions for constituting authenticity and strengthening persuasiveness. Therefore, the directness of news monographic reports and proximity of reporters to the event are important means to ensure authenticity and persuasiveness of the reports. But the news reporters can not always rush to the scene to carry out the related news. In this case, the reporters need to interview witnesses to compensate for the lack of live report.

For the report of large-scale emergencies, the reporter can restore the scene condition to a certain extent through eyewitness interview. If the ordinary people are the event participants and are interviewed by the reporters, it also means that the average readers witnessed the incidents reported. The greatest advantage lies in making news much more specific, makes it in line with the audience’s cognitive model, but also is much easier for the audience to imagine. Therefore, using the evidence from an eyewitness actually provides a figurative imagination for news audiences, so that the fact that the news reported come into contact with the cognitive structures of the audiences in the first time, ultimately impressing the audiences deeply. This deep impression can have a greater impact on social perception of the audiences, and paly a dominant role in their minds. As the modern psychologist Ebbinghaus (1908) put it: “to maintain and reproduce relies heavily on the

strength of the attention and interest when the mental activity first appeared.”

B. Using a Reliable Source of Information and Quote

Reliable sources are the foundation to support the core argument in the news monographic reports. Therefore, the reporters need to ensure that the primary source of information must be from a direct participant in the event whether the facts are described by a witness or are elaborated by the reporters. But Hovland (1953) believed that not all sources were equally reliable, there were several levels for the information sources. The reporters were inclined to quote the points of view from the elite to reflect the authority and seriousness of the news monographic reports. These views often have a strong logic and rationality and can highlight the core argument that the news topics want to express in sophisticated news. Meanwhile, if the reporters take the ideas from the social elite as reference, it also suggests to the reader to some extent that “the core arguments of the special news have been testified by the authority”. For the report of major news stories, quoting the words of experts is not only able to make reports much more vivid, but also directly shows that it is indeed what the experts said, so as to make verbal behavior be authentic.

In short, quoting the point of view with high confidence in the news monographic report, can strengthen the degrees of cognition on the news agenda of the audience in a short time, and make the subject subtly influence the audience’s existing cognition. In addition, it should be noted that the content cited is not necessarily correct and citing it only means that they are real, it is a kind of means to achieve their persuasion functions and effects.

C. Using the Accurate Data

News monographic reports can also imply the authenticity and motivation of the contents with the accurate figures. This is the reason why special news text is always filled with a variety of numbers, such as the number of participants in the event, their ages, the date of incidents and specific time, place, tools or digitized description of props(weight, size) and so on. The China News Network used the extensive data to report the Typhoon “Usagi” which showed the cruelty of natural disasters, and also implied that the relevant departments organized order and positive relief. This implies offset the fear that disaster brought to the audience to some extent and persuaded the audience to believe “the disaster has been given a positive and effective response”.

Using the exact data is to let the audience feel the accuracy of the information content, thereby signaling to the audience that the information is true. The truer the information is, the stronger its rationality and logic are, the better the persuasive effect will be.

4. The Persuasion Process of News Monographic Report

The persuasion process of news monographic report can be fully explained by the Elaboration Likelihood Model(Fig.1), the model was proposed by the American scholar Richard E·Petty and John T·Cacioppo in 1986. ELM

extended the persuasion research to two important research directions. Firstly, ELM elaborated that persuasion needed to consider the relative amount of information individuals can accept. This is a fine processing of the ELM, and fine processing operation is often involved in. Secondly, ELM divided the persuasion approach into the central path and the edge path. When people conduct the active, conscious fine processing for the information content elements, they use the central path; and when people judge based on some of the emotional aspects of non-content information components (such as color, music, pictures, etc.), they use the edge path.

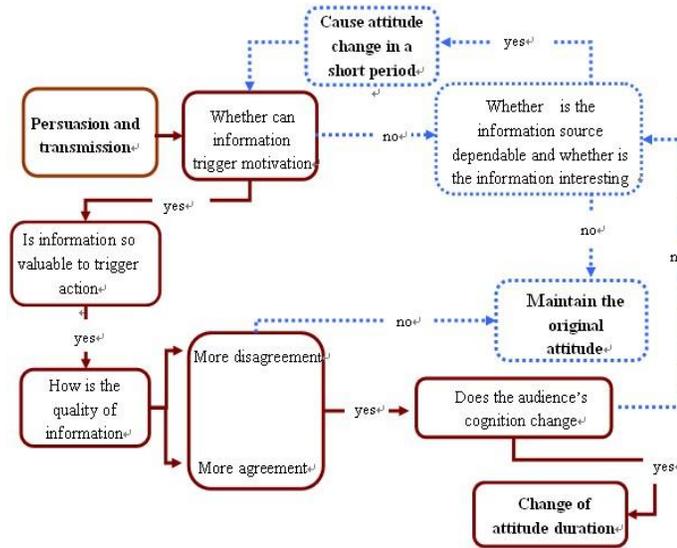


Fig. 1 The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion process.

The differences of the central path and the edge path are mainly in the following three aspects: firstly, the two paths handle different types of information. The central path processes the arguments related to information, and the edge path processes some message in the emotional aspects; secondly, people devote different cognitive efforts in the two paths. In the central path, people invest more cognitive effort than in the edge path. The central path needs to carefully consider and understand the arguments, assess the quality of these arguments, and integrate several conflicting arguments into an overall judgment; while it is a little different from the edge path. The edge path requires people to consider some obvious positive or negative hints; thirdly, the durability of different cognitive changes caused by the two paths is various. The central path will lead to stable cognitive changes which indicates as a long-term behavior as related to the prior argument which has been carefully considered; on the contrary, the change caused by the edge path is temporary and susceptible by negative factors, which can not predict as a long-term behavior.

Through the combing of the ELM, the paper considers the following factors play a major role in the persuasion process in the news monographic reports.

A. The Quality of Information

Based on the central path of ELM model, one of the key factors that influence the persuasion effect in the cognitive processes is the quality of the arguments. When the arguments in the persuasion information are so strong that the “sleeper effect” is much more likely to emerge. The “sleeper effect” refers that the information content and source are separated as time passes by. After persuasion occurred for a period of time, although individuals still remember the source of information, but their attitude will be mainly affected by the information content; and when time goes on, the impact on persuasion will not recess, but will increase.

News monographic reports are a collection of a variety of news and information for one theme. News monographic reports tend to choose those that have strong justifications, rigorous logical news and information as soliciting contributions in order to clarify a complex phenomenon news, which also determines the special news argument has a high quality. Meanwhile, the arguments with a high quality can promote the audience to put in much effort into the interpretation of the news monographic reports. Therefore, the persuasion process of news monographic reports usually occurs in the central path.

B. Relevance of the Information

ELM noted, when the theme of the content is closely related to the individual, the individual will be much more likely to process the information through the central path, and they will also be likely to be persuaded. This factor is the key to affect the persuasive effectiveness of news monographic reports. The main reason is that when the event is closely related to people, people will pay attention to the content of information, and will decide the degree of persuasion based on the strength of arguments. However, when events are not so close to personal relationships, people do not care about the arguments; on the contrary, they will adopt a peripheral cues [6], such as the news that China Central Television reported about the over-pricing of the Starbucks coffee in Chinese market on October 20, 2013, which showed that a weak information correlation has a weakening effect on the effectiveness of persuasion. In this special report, the reporter collected a lot of data and empirical points of view to illustrate that there would have over-pricing problems in Starbucks coffee. But because the subject is to discuss a report which has not strong association with the daily life of ordinary people, it made the core argument the media attempted to explain not been universally accepted, and it even suffered a question of “lack of economics knowledge”, “do not care about the living conditions of ordinary people” and other criticisms.

C. The Acceptance Expectations of the Audiences

Acceptance expectations refer to the existing estimates and expectations of the content and quality that the audiences have before receiving and making contact with the news and information. It is a collection of the original and various experiences, interests, literacy and satisfaction from the audiences[7]. For news monographic reports, acceptance

expectations affecting deeply the audiences' understanding level of the news and information and the understanding level of the information determines whether the audience can extract the core argument the special news emphasized from the complex news topics.

In summary, the persuasion process of the news monographic reports lies mainly in the central path in ELM mode, which is decided by the nature of the news coverage. But if the information news topics presented has not a strong correlation with the audience, then it will make the persuasion process away from the central path, and the core argument of news features might not be universally accepted by the audience, or even cause the opposite effect; the audiences' acceptance expectation determines whether the key argument can get an accurate understanding or not, which plays a fundamental role in persuasion process of the entire news report.

5. Conclusion

News monographic reports can not be strict news genre, and its soliciting contributions and presenting forms render it much closer to an information organizing tool. But this organizing means is not made randomly, it gathers relevant information around a certain topic, follows a certain logical order, and ultimately makes the whole news topics have a strong motivation and persuasiveness. This shows that the purpose of news monographic reports is not entirely to reflect

the facts objectively and comprehensively, but to try to pass on meaningful news and information to the audience through some persuasion means. This meaning orientation reflects the current social mainstream ideology and values to a certain extent.

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