

Opportunities and Challenges: Research on Chinese Broadcast of Health Communication

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ABSTRACT

Recently, health broadcast has expanded its meanings and functions, and played an important role in health communication, social governance, providing public service, and relieving people's anxiety regarding to their health. At the same time, it is facing the dilemma of fierce competition, serious audience loss, and misleading information is weakening its credibility. Something has to be done in Chinese broadcast of health communication: supplying more diversified programmes, providing more attractive stories, being suitable for more scenes.

Keywords: Health Broadcast, Audio Platform, Opportunities, Challenges.

1. CONNOTATION, STATUS, FUNCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTH BROADCAST

1.1 The Connotation and Status of Health Broadcast

The health broadcast in this paper refers to the generalized health broadcast, that is, the medium that spreads health information based on the auditory single channel, including the health radio channel, the health segment in other broadcast channels, and podcasts related to health in the Internet audio platform, such as XIMALAYA FM, AJMIDE FM, etc.

There are only two provincial radio channels nowadays: Shanxi Health Radio FM105.9 and Jiangsu Health Radio FM100.5/AM846. In addition, there are some health-like broadcast, such as Jilin Health & Entertainment Audio FM101.9, Zhenjiang Healthy & Life Broadcast FM94.0 etc.. Even though they focus not only on health, but also provide a lot of health information.

Health broadcast programs include health knowledge, expert consultation, and Chinese medicine culture and so on. There are typically such as the Healthy Lecture in CNR CHINA, Healthy Home in CNR Old and so on. Almost every channel has 1 or 2 self-run health programs, they analyze their customers and decide the programs' types, time, and styles.

There are a huge number of audios related to health on the Internet. On May 1, 2021, I searched "health" as a keyword in AJMIDE FM, and got 440 stations, 161 albums, 30,334 audios, 40,257 posts, 26 topics, and 34 events. XIMALAYA FM launched a Health category, in which 5 programs aired more than 100 million times, a lot of programs have been aired more than 10 million times. There are 112 categories in QI'E FM, but is no Health category. It's the same situation in QINGTING FM, 32 categories but Healthy is not included.

1.2 The functions of health broadcast

Health broadcast has both attributes related to audio and health. As a kind of audio communication, it's linear, transient, getting away from time and space; As a kind of health communication, it is authoritative and professional. The connotation, function and characteristics of health broadcast are constantly updated with the expansion of the meaning of health and broadcast.

Health broadcast can be a tool for health communication. This is a traditional, narrowly defined health broadcast function that includes disseminating health knowledge, delivering health concepts, teaching health recovery methods, and building a platform for health communication.

Health broadcast can be a tool for social governance. Health broadcast can improve the health of citizens and help decrease the cost of medical treatment. Professor

Zhang Cai said that “Broadcast is the most viscous media for the elderly[1],” health broadcast disseminates popular science knowledge, Introduces health care methods, conducts psychological counseling, provides leisure and entertainment, and organizes offline interactions, which have greatly helped the government to go into the aging society smoothly.

Health broadcast can be a social service channel. Health broadcast can also serve as a communication link for hygiene departments to promote long-term issues such as prevention and treatment of chronic diseases, physical fitness of the youth, oil control and salt control, household health, nutrition and obesity.

Health broadcast can also be a kind of mind decompression valve and emotional comforter. McLuhan pointed out that broadcast is a tribal drum. "The radio directly affects the majority, helping people enter a world where the author does not communicate with the audience by languages. Radio is direct, and it's a personal experience. It is the characteristic of the nature of the medium of broadcast, and the power of broadcast turns the mind and society into a Resonance box[2]". With the accelerated pace of life, psychological consulting programs and talk shows really have the ability to help listeners release stress and find themselves.

2. CHINA’S HEALTH BROADCAST ARE IN PREDICAMENT

2.1 broadcast decline: listening is less efficient and economic

With the popularity of TV and Internet, audiences have been more enthusiastic to participate in the media’s communication progress, and broadcasting has been unpopular in multi-directional competition: from the perspective of information acquisition efficiency, broadcast is inferior to newspapers and web news. From the perspective of presenting the whole reality, the broadcast is not as lively as the TV programs. Compared to short video, audio is not that vivid and interesting. Listening to broadcast has become inefficient, poor experience feeling and inferior satisfaction. People choose watching a popular science videos on Tik Tok, reading an articles published by Dr. DingXiang, or seeing a lively and interesting H5, instead of listening to the broadcast.

2.2 the broadcast couldn’t grasp the mobile audience

Fortunately, the radio found a chance in the case of a TV block and network chasing. The industrialization and urbanization brought a large number of urban people, these people are those who travels long distances between the workplace and residence is increasing. The 2018 China Urban Commuting Research Report released

by Aurora Big Data points out that the average commute distance of Beijing residents is 13.2km, with an average time of 56 minutes. Shanghai (54 minutes) and Chongqing (54 minutes) are closely followed. Beijing also has cross-city commuting people from Zhangjiakou, Chengde, Baoding, Tianjin, Langfang and other places.

However, the mobile listeners are mainly middle age and young people, who don’t care health issues that much. While older people who pay more attention to health issues are not in the main coverage of mobile listeners. “audiences of health issues” and “mobile listeners” are misplaced, so it is difficult for health broadcast to make breakthrough progress.

2.3 healthy content is lost in the “interesting” and “useful” arenas

There are more and more mobile phone netizens. According to the 47th Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development Status released by Chinese Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) in 2021, as of 2020, the scale of China’s internet users reached 989 million, and the Internet penetration rate reached 70.4%. The number of mobile Internet users reached 986 million. The proportion of Internet users using mobile phones to access the Internet reached 99.7%[3].

Audio and video applications are very popular among netizens. In 2020, netizens in China were online for an average of 26.2 hours per week[4]. The competition between the Internet audio platform and video and short video platforms is a game of symbol and image, and a game of knowledge and entertainment. The former one is obviously at a disadvantage. What’s more, health issues are competing with other interesting issues. QI’E FM and QINGTING FM do not have a Health category; although there are 5 health-themed audio programs in the XIMALAYA FM that have been aired more than 100 million times, the horizontal comparison found that among the number of programs with over 100 million plays: 6 in English, 20 in Music, 22 in Commercial Finance, 13 in Emotional Life, and 18 in Cross Talk. So the health theme is not competitive on the Internet audio platform at all.

2.4 Pseudo-health knowledge and medical advertisements "bad money drives out good money"

Both in the traditional health broadcast or Internet health audio, there exist a large number of dissemination of pseudo-science, non-standard or even illegal, for example, the medical corporation who sponsors a program in the name of Health spread widely pseudo-health knowledge, confused information, and constantly overdrew the credibility of public broadcasting.

From the perspective of pharmaceutical companies, the audience of health programs and consumers of medical advertisements have a very high degree of overlap. In order to promote product sales and establish a brand image, they make product placement in the health broadcast. They win consumers' trust by the implantation or long-term infiltration, which indirectly promote product sales. They try to blur the boundaries between product advertising and healthy information, and transform the audience into consumers in an inducing way, which seriously damages the audience's interests and the reputation of health broadcast.

3. THE HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT PATH OF HEALTH BROADCAST

3.1 Health Cognition Upgrades from "One Dimensional" to "Four Dimensional"

Health is a constantly evolving concept. With the development of society and the progress of cognition, the connotation of health develops from a single physical health (one-dimensional) to physical and mental health (two-dimensional), then develops into physiology, psychological, and social well (three-dimensional). In 1989, the World Health Organization deepened the concept of health, arguing that health includes physical health, mental health, social well-being and moral health (four-dimensional) [5]. Therefore, the content of health broadcast should also be expanded from disease prevention and control to psychological counseling, social adaptation and moral counseling. Specifically, it is necessary to achieve three transformations.

Firstly, we must shift the focus from treating to prevention. Professor Wang Yu proposed that the "de-sickness" feature in China's health radio programs is obvious, most of the programs focus on the diagnosis of diseases, which are targeted to the sick listeners, without taking into account the healthy listeners' requirements[6]. Therefore, health broadcast should shift from patient to healthy people.

Secondly, we must extend long-term issues from chronic disease prevention to tobacco control, exercise and fitness. Health broadcasts must constantly highlight its public welfare and service attributes, expand the scope of long-term issues, and attract attention about the fitness, diet, medical care, technological dynamics, oil control and tobacco control, vaccines, obesity, and mental health, which can help the public change their health concepts and pursue healthy lifestyles.

Thirdly, health broadcast must carry out mental health guidance and spiritual comfort. McLuhan pointed out in the theory of media ecology that "in the primitive society, hearing is more valuable than vision. Hearing makes people understand the surrounding environment more quickly [7]" . "The auditory environment fosters more enthusiasm and spontaneity. In this world of sounds,

everything is more direct, immediate and real." Nowadays the media environment has not allowed us to return to the auditory era when the ear is the main sensory organ, but we still miss and look forward to the real era, the media experience that can protect health secrets and provide personalized service. Health broadcast should further explore the needs of the audience, pay attention to the field of mental health, and open psychological messages or emotional comfort programs.

3.2 The communication channel is upgraded from single channel to multiple channels

The differentiation of the age, jobs, and social level between audiences determines they have totally different requirements in health. For the health broadcast, only by being diversified can they meet users' requirement and let them stay.

Take Jiangsu health radio as an example. On the basis of trying to operate traditional FM radio, it carefully managed business content and launches Jiangsu Health Channel programs on internet audio platforms such as XIMALAYA FM, AJMIDE FM, QINGTING FM, QI'E FM. They opened a WeChat subscription account, containing 3 applications, program listening, registration + shopping, and big blue whale selection. It gradually builded a micro-ecology that "listen-talk-reward-buy" and served users in multiple dimensions.

3.3 Be more shorter and funny

3.3.1 Be more interesting

Interesting includes multiple dimensions such as the topic, content, and expression. In terms of interesting topics, 39 Health Net and XIMALAYA FM co-produced albums, such as be healthy album has updated 1966 episodes, they launched the programs entitled how many farts should we put out every day? There are 4 kinds of foods make your lips and teeth stay fragrant. Married people are more likely to gain weight than the single one. Another program named Special Program for Princess MING, explains four magical Chinese medicine tricks in that hot drama. The single program has been clicked more than 56,000 times. Therefore, it is possible to combine the hot drama and the hot news to enhance the interest of the health broadcast. For example, the Health Check Program in BBC introduces the principles of diseases such as rabies, and disseminates health knowledge based on news from all over the world[8]. What's more, health broadcast can also learn from Canadian radio dramas, a program entitled Health In 24 Solar on QI'E FM and so on, which can enhance interest in all aspects by cutting in special angles, using distinctive sound symbols, and strengthening audience participation.

3.3.2 *Be more shorter*

1966 episodes in the Healthy Health album are basically controlled within 5 minutes, including 1-3 minutes of mini audio, which using short texts to explain the symptoms, causes, hazards and prevention methods, easy to understand and put into practice. The album is short and succinct, making full use of the characteristics of people listening and stopping in a fast-paced life. Among them, Be Careful When You Drink After Exercise, Four Kinds of Skin-Care Face-Washing Methods, Eliminating Belly Fat, Bad Sleep Habits Leading to Insomnia have been aired for more than 300,000 times.

3.4 *Being suitable for more scenes*

In the future development of health broadcast, it is necessary to create a co-temporal field through sound, and to integrate the individuals who are in daily life scenes into the health communication process or health communication coverage as much as possible, to nurture users in a subtle way, and to gradually step from the big scene to small scenes and upgrade from multi-objects communication to one to another precise communication.

The health broadcast can develop audiences in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, disease control centers, and physical examination centers. When people are sick, they are more likely to pay attention to health problems and need to be accompanied.

It can also provide systematic broadcast health education for visually impaired people. Health broadcasting can be regarded as a new channel of "Internet + disabled services", providing equal opportunities and healthy cultivation time for disabled people in the process of broadcasting, teaching and voice entertainment.

In addition, the health broadcast can dig deep into the application scenarios in special environments, such as long-distance running, diving, doing housework, taking care of babies and so on. It can also play an important role in the scenes of emergency or disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, where the health broadcast can show its advantages of low cost and companionship.

4. CONCLUSION

There is no backward media. McLuhan believes that "the medium is an extension of humanity," and "Broadcast is an extension of the central nervous system. Only verbal ability can match it. At this point, it exceeds the telephone and telegraph[9]". Therefore, when TV users had bad-mouth on broadcast, or short-video users underestimate the audio, health broadcast practitioners and researchers should focus on exploring the better way to optimize the content, forms, and channels, being more suitable for the current communication environment.

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