

On the Communication Rules and Influencing Mechanism of “Ugliness Appreciation Culture” Communication through Microblog

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Abstract. With the rapid development of Internet, microblog/Weibo, as a social platform, is gradually merging into various aspects of people’s lives. As a kind of ancient sub-culture, “ugliness appreciation culture” is spreading via microblog. This paper focuses on the communication of 2016 Super Girl audition video compilation in microblog and analyzes the mechanism of microblog communication and user attitudes by means of content analysis. The study finds that during the video compilation communication by microblog, opinion leaders play important roles. On the other hand, most Weibo users hold entertaining attitude towards the “ugliness appreciation culture”, which meets their needs of relaxation.

Keywords: ugliness appreciation culture, Sina Weibo, opinion leader, video compilation, content analysis.

I. The Proposal of Question

The program Super Girl started to broadcast from the first quarter to the third quarter of 2016, which became the pure net variety show of Mango TV. However, in the process of the audition, the video compilation of it began to appear on Sina Weibo. These video compilers collect distinctive players from the audition. From these players, a subculture concept can be extracted, that is, the “ugliness appreciation culture”.the author proposes the following assumptions:

(A) Forwarder’s attitude is negatively correlated with publisher’s attitude. When the publisher’s attitude is negative, the forwarder’s attitude is more likely to be negative.

(B) The forwarding volume of the microblog and the follower’s number of the publisher are positively correlated. The more fans of the publisher, the more forwarding amount of the microblog.

(C) The secondary forwarding amount of the microblog and the fan’s number of the primary forwarder are positively correlated. The more fans of the primary forwarder, the more forwarding amount of the microblog.

II. . Research Methods

1. Sample Extraction

(1) Selection of Target Samples

Sina Weibo is the influential representative among many microblog brands in China. With Sina’s leading, other major sites have gradually launched their own microblog business. Television stations and other media are also gradually into the microblog business stage. Thus, this paper chooses Sina Weibo as the object of the study.

(2) Description of the Sampling Rules

As this study involves the authenticated users with different fan’s number, the author filters out the authenticated users who have published the audition video of Super Girl on Sina Weibo and select those whose comment and forwarding amount are both over 500. Then randomly select two Weibo users from the three ranges: fans less than or equal to 2 million, 2 million to 5 million and more than 5 million and the total number is six. The six authenticated users is as the sample of publisher. On the other hand, select latest 10 relevant microblogs from each publisher (total: 60 microblogs) with forwarding reason as the sample of forwarder.

2. Construction and Description of the Category

After reading and analyzing these samples, the author regards each piece of microblog as a coding

unit and designs the coding table from the following five aspects: the forwarded amount of publisher’s microblog, the publishers’ attitude, forwarder’s attitude, the fan’s number of the forwarder and whether the forwarder’s microblog to be forwarded or commented again.

(1) Forwarded Amount of Publisher’s Microblog

This category is divided into three ranges: less than 1000 times, 1000 to 1500 times and more than 1500 times. The forwarded number of publisher’s microblog, to some extent, reflects the attention degree of the publisher.

(2) Publisher’s Attitude

This category is divided into three sub-categories: complaint & entertainment, support and ambiguity. Support means that the publisher is positive about the content, with the key words involving “excellent”, “support” and expressive emoticons. Complaint & entertainment refers to the publisher’s objection to the content with words “freak”, “embarrassing”, “ROFL” (Rolling on the Floor Laughing), “despair” and suggestive emoticons. As for the ambiguous attitude, it is difficult to determine the publisher’s attitude.

(3) Forwarder’s Attitude

This category is divided into four kinds: bystander or concerning-others, complaint & entertainment, support and ambiguity. Bystander means that the forwarded content does not involve the the audition players’ performance or the attitude to the video is more neutral. Complaint & entertainment refers that the forwarded content is clearly complaining the players and showing the entertaining attitude towards the video. Support means the forwarded content shows positive feelings to the contestants. As for the ambiguous attitude, it means that from the forwarded content, it is difficult to determine the attitude of forwarders.

(4) Follower’s Number of the Forwarder

This category is divided into four parts, namely, less than 100 followers, 100 to 500 followers, 500 to 1500 followers, and more than 1500 followers. The fan’s number of the forwarder, to a certain degree, reflects the forwarder’s active level and influence on Weibo, that is to say, whether the forwarder has the characteristics of opinion leader or not.

III. Findings and Discussion

1. The Forwarded Number of the Publisher’s Microblog

Through the analysis of the publisher sample, it is found that the number of the publishers’ fans are: @Sina Entertainment (17.71 million), @ happy Zhang Jiang(6.83 million), @ Miao Pai(5.08 million), @ Yu Le Quan Ba Jie(2.06 million), @ Bao Liao Yi Jie(1.24 million), @ Dou Yuan Shuai(1.21 million), @ Bao Liao Yi Jie, 768 and the most is @ Sina Entertainment, 1622. As shown in Fig. 1, the publisher’s microblog is forwarded up to 1000 to 1500 times, with 3 samples in this range.

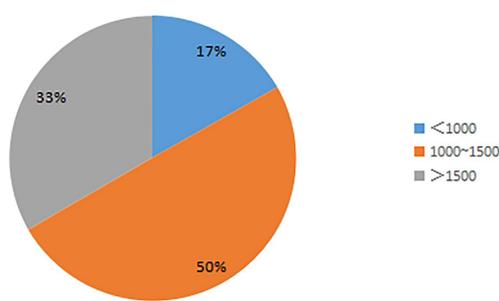


Fig. 1
(The Forwarded Number of the Publisher’s Microblog)

2. Publisher’s Attitude

By analyzing the collected samples of publisher, it is found that none of the six publisher samples shows positive attitude towards the video (Fig. 2), such as the microblog text from @ Miao Pai: “Latest 2016 Super Girl Selected Funny Highlights, the Judges are surprised to be dumb, Causing My Embarrassing Cancer...What’s the Hell of the Thing with a HORN? (emoticon: goodbye)”. The

words “laughter”, “embarrassing cancer” and so on, are in line with the negative attitude. The publishers hold complaining and teasing attitude to the video. As opinion leaders on Weibo, with followers between one million and ten million, their attitude probably affects their followers or fans. On the other hand, the publisher’s attention to “ugliness” also reflects the “ugliness appreciation culture” as a subculture and continues its role of being played. But there is an over-entertaining crisis. The ugliness-appreciating object in the video is not necessarily initiative to present ugly, but once it is released on Weibo, the users’ unrestricted complaining and teasing makes the original idea of “ugliness appreciation culture” distorted.

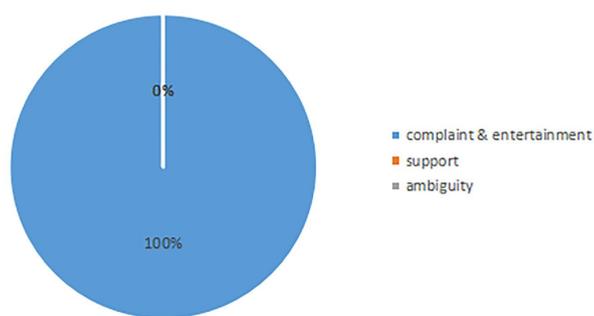


Fig. 2
(Publisher’s Attitude)

3. Follower’s Number of the Forwarder

Through the analysis of the collected sample of forwarders, it shows that among the 60 samples, there were 28 users with less than 100 fans, accounting for 47% of the total number (see in Fig. 3); 19 with fans between 100 and 500, accounting for 32%; 11 with fans between 501 to 1500 people, accounting for 18% and only 2 with more than 1500 followers, accounting for 3% of the total number. The number of users with less than 500 fans (including 500) reached to 79%, which, in contrast, is almost 26 times the number of users with more than 1500 fans. The statistics of fan’s number of the forwarders is helpful to explain the potential communicating scope of the forwarded microblog. Among these forwarders, 47% of them are with less than 100 fans, which makes the spreading range of the microblog narrow, but it may be concerned with the using habits (such as multiple accounts); while only 21% forwarders’ fans number is up to 500, indicating that when the follower’s number reaches to a certain degree, the user’s awareness to supervise his/her opinions and expressions will be enhancing.

4. Forwarder’s Attitude

Through the analysis of the collected forwarders’ samples, it is found that in the 60 microblogs, 46 shows the attitude of complaining and teasing, which accounted for 77% (Fig. 4). And complaint & entertainment is also the category with most forwarded amount. Typical examples of the microblog text are like: “Watching It Causes My Embarrassing Cancer”and “Seem To Be Raped by Their Voice (emoticon)” and so on. The words “embarrassing cancer”, “laugh cry” and other emoticons with clear emotional expression are in line with the attitude of complaining and teasing. And there are 10 forwarders with ambiguous attitude, such as shocked expression, “Watch the video for such a long time that find out sxy is in my school (emoticon: laugh cry)and look better in reality (emoticon: funny)”. In “onlookers or concerned about others” category, most focus on the judges and the TV station, such as “Huang Guolun’s laughter is also a highlight (emoticon: laugh cry)”, “Hunan TV speculation no bottom line” and so on. It is worth noting that in the 60 samples, not one of the forwarders show support to the players’ performance.

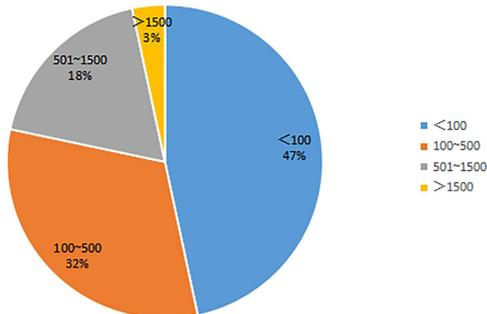


Fig. 3

(The Number of Forwarder's Fans)

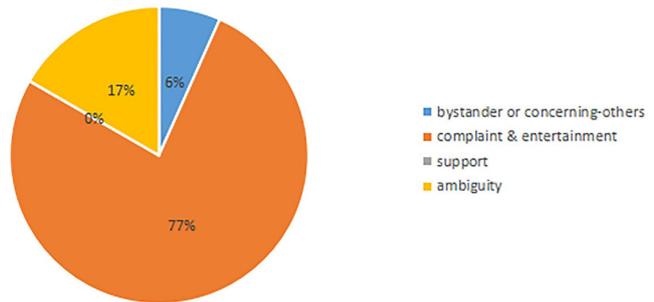


Fig. 4

(Forwarder's Attitude)

IV. Conclusion

After the above analysis of the sample, one assumption stands:

Assumption one: forwarder's attitude is influenced by publisher's attitude. The forwarder's attitude is more likely to be negative when the publisher's attitude is negative.

In contrast, the following assumptions are not true:

Assumption two: the forwarded amount of the microblog is affected by the fan's number of the publisher, the more followers of the publisher, the more forwarded amount of the microblog.

Assumption three: the secondary forwarding amount is affected by the follower's number of primary forwarder, the more fans of primary forwarder, the more forwarding amount of the microblog.

In short, as a kind of ancient subcultures, the communication of ugliness appreciation culture has some new features on Weibo. However, it must be pointed out that more and more kuso with entertaining feature deconstruct the own value of ugliness appreciation culture. At the same time, on Weibo, the phenomenon entertainment for entertainment is increasingly serious. This trend of vulgarization and excessive entertainment could lead to the deterioration of ugliness appreciation culture. In the face of opinion leader's misinterpretation and kuso about ugliness appreciation culture, the public often accept these unconsciously. Ugliness appreciation culture, as a subculture, may encounter more problems on Weibo.

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